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## A Modern Comedy of Errors.

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### CHAPTER XXXII.

#### THE CRISIS.

MR. DURSLEY opened an envelope containing a telegram which Fly, who had been living with him ever since Dorothy's marriage, had just brought him, read it eagerly, crumpled it up, then rose from his seat and walked restlessly up and down the room till his eyes rested on Fly, who was watching him silently.

"What do you want, Fly?" said Paul impatiently.

"What do I want, sir? I want a heart of stone instead of flesh, then it would not make any difference to me whether my missus was living or dying. I suppose servants was made without any feelings, even for them as held 'em in their arms at the font, as Miss Dursley did me; I mean Mrs. Crofton. If Dr. Crofton had let her bide Miss Dursley, she would have been living here along of us; you would be a sight richer and I happier than we are. That's what I am waiting for, Mr. Paul, to hear how Miss Dorothy is," said Fly with dignity.

"She is no better, my boy; she can't be for some days. The most we dare hope is she may be no worse than at present; she is at death's door, Fly," said Dursley kindly.

Fly's dignity was entirely upset by this information; he burst into tears and retired howling to the butler's pantry.

That functionary chose to suppose his master had boxed his ears, and as Fly was no favourite with him or his wife, who both robbed Paul right and left, he received no sympathy from

that quarter. Presently the dining-room bell rang, and Fly dried his eyes and made a face at the butler preparatory to answering it.

"Fly, would you like to go to Lyneham with me to-day for a week? We shall know the best or the worst by then, and I dare say you can be of use to them; you won't be the worse for a little country air."

Fly was so charmed at this proposal that he turned a series of somersaults in the hall and re-entered the pantry heels foremost, to the exceeding wrath of the butler, who angrily demanded, in unreportable language, what was the matter now.

"Mr. Dursley can't do without me, so I am going to Lyneham with him this afternoon," said Fly.

James was genuinely pleased to welcome his old colleague when he met Paul and his satellite that evening, but he brought no further news; matters were still *in statu quo*.

"Master is terrible cut up; he look ten year older nor he did last week, and he eat nothing, so they tell me. T' make my heart ache to see him, that t' do," said James in the broadest Eastfolk dialect.

One thought had taken possession of Paul and haunted him all through the journey, namely, the fear lest Dorothy should be delirious, and in her delirium betray to Sir Peter the secret of Sir John Dane's death; so one of his first questions on seeing Peter was: "Is she delirious?"

"No; Crofton said she wandered a little yesterday, but she has scarcely spoken since I have been with her," said Sir Peter, as he proceeded to enter into professional details.

"Crofton is out, I suppose," said Paul.

"Yes; the more he is out while we are here the better, poor fellow; he can do no good, and he is terribly cut up. Hitherto she has known him, but she takes me for you and imagines you are living here still."

Sir Peter left that evening, but Mr. Dursley remained till the following night and travelled up by the night mail, leaving Fly till he returned at the end of a week, when the crisis would be reached, unless Dorothy died in the meanwhile.

During this week, while Mrs. Crofton lay hovering between life and death, and Dr. Crofton oscillated between hope and fear, between Peter's opinion, which was unfavourable, and Paul's, which was hopeful, Fly made himself acquainted with the local

gossip. Among other items he learnt that Miss Chloe Dane was not at all well and was expected home from Italy very shortly. It was an open secret in the neighbourhood, where, as in most country places, every one knows his neighbour's business better than his own, that there was an attachment between Mr. Dursley and the youngest Miss Dane, and that but for Sir John's unfortunate death they would have been married long ago. Fly, of course, knew more than any one except Dorothy and Paul, and Fly had recently come to a decision, that if Mrs. Crofton died he should take upon himself the responsibility of divulging to Miss Chloe the truth about her father's death.

He was goaded to this course mainly by being an unwilling witness to the systematic robbery to which his master was subjected by the butler and his wife, which the code of honour prevalent below stairs forbade him to expose. The only possible remedy was, in Fly's shrewd opinion, the marriage of his master; a mistress would, he thought, soon put a stop to such wholesale cheating as now went on in Paul's establishment; and instinct taught him Chloe was the only wife for his master.

If Mrs. Crofton lived he would not dare to interfere, his reliance on her judgment was so strong, and in that case he might probably give her a hint that a mistress for Mr. Dursley's house was sorely needed.

Fly drove out every day of his visit with Dr. Crofton, whose heart he had quite won by his genuine sympathy for Dorothy's danger; his leisure moments were occupied in teasing his successor, and scornfully initiating him into some of the mysteries of what Fly called "our profession." The days dragged wearily on for Dr. Crofton, and still there was no change in his wife's condition. On the day of the crisis Mr. Dursley arrived, intending to stop the night, and if the disease took a favourable turn, return the next day with Fly to town.

Both Crofton and his brother-in-law sat up that night in Dorothy's room, anxiously watching every slightest symptom. She was in a semi-conscious state, and while Paul sat holding her wrist on one side of the bed, Crofton sat sometimes on the other side with his head buried in his hands; sometimes, if she murmured or moved, gazing anxiously at her, praying silently that if she were taken from him she would speak to him before she left him.

He thought of the intense happiness of his two years of married life; he thought of the few clouds, and those chiefly of his own making, which had darkened that happiness now and again for a few brief hours, and he exaggerated his own faults of temper which had been the cause of their little tiffs.

Now and again Dorothy spoke, but her mutterings were indistinct and incoherent. Paul fancied the leading idea in her wandering mind was his innocence, but even he, who held the clue to much she said, could not be sure of this. At any rate, his name was oftener on her lips than any one's, even than her husband's, a fact he deplored, for Crofton was, he knew, jealous of Dorothy's favourite brother.

About four o'clock, just as the first streaks of daylight were piercing the drawn curtains, Paul rose from his seat and bent over his sister for a minute or two, then he looked across the bed at the poor anxious husband, put his finger on his lips, and signed to him to come into the next room.

The two men crept out of the bedroom into Crofton's dressing-room, and then Paul said, "Thank God. She is out of danger; the fever has left her and she is sleeping. Go to bed, old fellow, and I'll send the nurse to watch her." Crofton wrung his brother-in-law's hand silently, and flinging himself on his bed was soon sound asleep, worn out with anxiety. He slept till late the next morning, and learnt that Dorothy had been awake and taken some nourishment, and that she was, though very weak, doing as well as they could wish. Paul had telegraphed the good news to Peter, and was to follow his telegram in an hour's time, Crofton promising to telegraph for him if there were any relapse.

Dorothy, however, had a splendid constitution, and made a rapid recovery. In a fortnight's time she was able to sit up in her room, and might have gone downstairs if she would have allowed her husband to carry her, which he was most anxious to attempt, and she most determined not to permit. They had kept her very quiet, and had not at present allowed any one to see her, though many friends called to inquire for her, but Crofton fancied she had something on her mind, for she was not her usual bright happy self by any means.

That she was fretting for her dead baby he knew, but he felt sure something else was troubling her, and her anxiety to know what she talked about when she was delirious increased this idea.



"Why are you so anxious to know what you talked about?"

"Because people sometimes betray secrets in fever, don't they?"

"What if they do? You have no secret to betray, have you?" said Crofton.

"I might have said something calculated to make mischief or mislead others," said Dorothy evasively.

"Whom would it be likely to mislead?"

"You, or any one who heard me. Has Chloe come home yet, do you know, Michael?"

"Not that I am aware of," said Crofton, beginning to wonder if Dorothy had any secret which she had not confided to him, and deciding if she had it was her duty to divulge it at once.

"If she has arrived I should like to see her. I mean her to be my first visitor," said Dorothy.

"I am going to Bilney to-morrow; if you like I will call and see if she is at home; but I don't think you are well enough to see any one just yet."

"Oh yes, I am well enough to see her. I must see her. I shan't get better till I have seen her," said Dorothy rather fretfully.

"Why do you want so particularly to see Miss Chloe?"

"I can't tell you. Don't ask me, Michael," said Dorothy in a troubled voice.

Crofton's suspicions that something was on her mind were now fairly awakened, and he said with a marital air of authority he was fond of assuming on occasions of the kind:

"Why can't you tell me? Surely my wife can have no secrets from her husband."

"I wish she hadn't, most devoutly," said the wife.

"But she ought not to have any; it is her duty to confide in her husband."

"If it concerned herself alone, yes, but my secret concerns others more than myself," said Dorothy.

"I don't think that affects the question; a true wife should have no secret from her husband; if she has, she is wanting in confidence and trust in him, and I should be sorry to think you were lacking in either," said Crofton rather sententiously.

"I am not; you ought not to suggest such a thing; it is very unkind of you, Michael;" and being still very weak, Mrs. Crofton burst into tears.

In a moment Dr. Crofton had his arms round her and was soothing her as he would a crying child ; and she felt her illness was already bearing fruit, for instead of going away offended as he would have done before, he blamed himself for having said a word to hurt her feelings, and protested that he did not mean it.

"Oh, Michael ! I long to tell you ; it is only because I am afraid of doing wrong that I don't. It is not want of trust, and I want your advice ; but it is a secret which affects others so terribly. I wish I knew what I ought to do. When I was so near death I thought I had done wrong to keep it, and I vowed I would tell the person it most affects if I lived."

"But you can't tell me ? Dorothy, I swear by all I hold most sacred, if you tell me it shall be as safe with me as though I knew it not," said Crofton earnestly.

"I think I must tell you. It has always seemed rather a barrier ; I cannot bear to keep the least thing from you. Are you sure it won't be wrong of me ?" said Mrs. Crofton, by which it will be seen her husband's opinion was a second conscience to her.

"I am sure it will be right," he answered.

"Well, it was not I who made the mistake in Sir John Dane's medicine."

"You don't mean to say it was Paul, after all, who made up the pills ?" exclaimed Crofton greatly interested.

"No, Paul had nothing to do with it ; he took all the blame."

"Then who on earth did make the mistake ?"

"Peter," whispered Dorothy.

"Peter ! Sir Peter ! Impossible !" exclaimed Crofton.

"Nothing is impossible, Michael ; Peter wrote scruples instead of grains, and I, not knowing anything about the quantity usually given, made up the pills according to his prescription. To save his reputation Paul and I hushed it up."

"It was most generous of Paul to sacrifice himself in that way," remarked Crofton.

"Yes, but I am not sure that it was altogether right ; you see he is sacrificing Chloe too. She won't marry him because she thinks his carelessness was the cause of her father's death, and neither she nor Paul will ever be happy apart. Michael, I want to tell Chloe ; do you think I ought to do so ?"

"It is a very grave question. You see, if Miss Chloe cut up

nasty it might ruin Sir Peter. I think before you venture on such a step you must be perfectly certain that she cares for Paul; but you, with your woman's wit, need not have much difficulty in discovering that, I should think."

"I am sure she did care for him, but I have not seen her for two years; Bertha told me she believed Chloe still cared; I think I could tell if I were to see Chloe."

"Well, I'll go over there to-morrow, and if she is at home I will fix an early day for her to lunch with you, and then you will see how the land lies," said Crofton, kissing his wife and leaving her.

When he was gone Dorothy gave a sigh of intense relief and fell sound asleep like a tired child. Now that the weight was off her mind, she felt such a sense of freedom when she woke that she wondered how she could have carried the burden of so great a secret so long alone. Now that Crofton shared it with her it was no longer a burden, for, according to her notions, all the responsibility rested with him, and she had nothing to do but obey his counsels. By which state of affairs it will be seen Dorothy Crofton had not imbibed a single grain of the modern spirit which animates the typical woman of the nineteenth century. So far from arrogating to herself any airs of superiority over her husband, she did not even claim equality with him, but meekly accepted the subordinate position nature, among other old-fashioned things, assigned to woman, and found her happiness in so doing.

The following morning Crofton received a letter from Augusta Dane, which he showed to his wife, asking him to call and see her sister Chloe, who had just returned from Italy very much out of health.

"Poor little Chloe! I wonder if she is fretting for Paul," said Dorothy.

"If so, between us, perhaps we shall be able to cure her," said Crofton.

"She will be the first cure of yours I have ever had a finger in, then," laughed Dorothy, and her laugh sounded almost as fresh and ringing as it used to do, by which Crofton judged she was better, though there was a listlessness and lack of interest in every-day life about her, which was a new element in her nature, and was caused, as her husband knew, by the loss of her baby.

"I wish you would come and help me to dispense some medicines this morning when you come down, will you?" he asked.

"No, dear, I shall never do that again; my dispensing has caused too much sorrow for me to venture on that," said Dorothy, but she was pleased that he had asked her.

It had come too late, though, as things have a way of coming, even to those who know how to wait.

On Dr. Crofton's return from Bilney he sought Dorothy to tell her Chloe was coming to luncheon the following day.

"How is she?"

"Well, she is ill, but I can't find out what is wrong with her. I am anxious about her, though. If she does not get better soon I shall send her up to see Peter. But we will see what Dr. Dorothy can do first," said Crofton.

Dorothy's answer was a sigh.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### CHLOE CHANGES HER MIND.

CHLOE returned to Bilney about a fortnight after Mrs. Crofton was pronounced out of danger. She looked so thin and pale when she got out of the train that Augusta was quite concerned, and inquired anxiously after her health.

"I had a bad passage; I still feel the movement of the vessel, and I am tired, that is all," said Chloe.

"She will be better to-morrow, Augusta. A bad passage always does one a world of good; it is so much better to have it rather rough, I always think. Even if one is ill, one knows it will do one good, and that is such a comfort," said Constance.

"I did not find it so; I only wished some one would throw me overboard," said Chloe, as she got into the back seat of the pony-carriage.

"Chloe, dear, what a terrible wish. But a good night's rest will make a different being of you. You will be all right to-morrow; you are only tired," said Constance.

"I am always tired now," said Chloe wearily, as Constance whipped up the ponies and they drove off.

Constance's hopeful prophecy was not fulfilled. Chloe, so far from being all right the next day, was so unlike herself that

Augusta was alarmed, and having written a very gloomy account of her to Bertha, decided to send her up to London, to be under Sir Peter's care if she did not get better; but in thus resolving Augusta forgot to take Chloe's wishes into consideration.

The return home seemed to open all the old wounds afresh. Her father's presence appeared to haunt the house, but still more strongly outlined was the memory of the various scenes with Paul Dursley which the house recalled to her mind. Augusta and Constance did not seem to have advanced a step in any way since she left them; Augusta was as precise and punctual as ever, Constance as cheerful, both as busy, Augusta with the house, Constance with the garden, and both with the parish. They had not changed any more than the pumas and jaguars in the hall, and to Chloe the latter were as congenial companions as her two eldest sisters.

Constance irritated her far more than Augusta, and she hated herself for being so easily irritated.

"Tell us about your concerts, Chloe, dear; you seem to have been a great success," said Constance.

"There is not much to tell. I played and the people clapped; then I bowed, and they clapped again, and I bowed again; then they used to throw bouquets at my feet, and I stooped and picked them up, and handed them to some one to carry away, and bowed lower than ever, and smiled as pleasantly as I knew how, and dear Mrs. Johnson wept for joy, and we went our way rejoicing, and the next day the papers talked a lot of nonsense about *la bella Inglesa*, who played the violin so divinely; and that was about all. The programmes varied at each concert, the routine of applause never varied. I grew sick unto death of it," said Chloe.

"Why, Chloe, what more could you possibly want? Think how very, very few girls enjoy such happiness as yours. Applause, bouquets, praise in the papers; what more of this world's prizes could you desire?" said Constance.

"I daresay it is very ungrateful of me, but somehow the clapping of hands and stamping of feet of a few hundred people, half-a-dozen bouquets from total strangers, and half a column of favourable, sometimes fulsome, criticism in a newspaper, did not commend itself to me as the *summum bonum* of life. No doubt

it ought to have satisfied every craving of my nature, but as a matter of fact it did not," said Chloe.

"I am afraid, dear, you are just a little bit discontented, aren't you? You have so much to be thankful for, all your natural gifts, your talent, your——"

"Oh, please, Constance, don't enumerate my natural gifts; I am quite sufficiently conscious of them. Don't make me vainer than I am," interrupted Chloe.

"You should try and be grateful for them, instead of vain of them; I am sure that is all you want; a spirit of thankfulness for all the good things you enjoy, to make you perfectly happy, as you ought to be," pursued Constance.

"The spirit of thankfulness may be all I want, but all it rouses in me to be told so is the spirit of wrath," said Chloe.

"Let her alone, Constance; we have not all your gift of cheerfulness," said Augusta in a very satirical tone.

"It would be a sad and sorry world if we had," muttered Chloe, taking her violin out of its case preparatory to escaping from Constance with it.

"Chloe, I have arranged with Bertha that you should visit them next week and be under Sir Peter's care; I am sure you need medical advice," said Augusta.

"Have you indeed?" said Chloe, flushing crimson. "I am sorry to upset your arrangements, but I can't go."

"Not go to Bertha whom you are so fond of! What could be nicer than a visit to her? We always enjoy staying with her, it is such a pleasant little change," said Constance.

"Then for heaven's sake go and have the pleasant little change and leave me in peace. I am not going; I told Bertha so in Italy," said Chloe in a pet.

"Why not, dear? What can be your objection?" persisted Constance.

"Bertha knows," said Chloe, escaping to her own room with her violin.

It was then that Augusta wrote to Dr. Crofton and asked him to come and see the rebellious Chloe; she kept her own counsel as to having done so, and took care that Chloe was at home when he came.

Chloe was evidently pleased to see Dr. Crofton, and asked eagerly for his wife; but when he questioned her about her own



health he could get very little out of her, except that she was always tired and yet did not sleep well.

"Constance says all I want is a spirit of thankfulness, so you had better give me something to create that and drive out the spirit of rebellion that is usurping gratitude's throne," said Chloe.

"I think that is more in my wife's line than mine. Suppose you come and lunch with us on Saturday, and see what you can do for each other: Dorothy wants rousing; she is fretting for her baby."

"I should love to come, but I have sold my horse, and I don't like to take the ponies from the others; they use them every day."

"Oh! I'll fetch you, and they can drive over in the evening and bring you back. You are hardly strong enough to ride just now, but as soon as you get a little better I shall order you riding exercise. Do you know Paris belongs to me now? She was not suited to London work so Dursley gave her to me as a wedding present," said Dr. Crofton, wishing to see if the mention of Paul had any effect on his pale little patient.

He was rewarded by seeing the little pale face grow crimson and the red lips tremble, and when he came out of the house, after having interviewed Augusta concerning Chloe, he found her standing by Paris's side giving her sugar and rubbing her black curly head against the mare's arched neck.

On the following Saturday he drove her over to Bilney, and told his wife afterwards he was not surprised the girl had so many admirers, as she certainly was a very fascinating little creature.

"She insisted on driving Paris, and I had to yield, though I did it at the risk of making you a widow; but they seemed to understand each other. She talked French to the mare, and I believe Paris knew what she meant."

"Paul never spoke English to Paris; he used to say she did not understand it," said Dorothy, who had spent the morning turning the room that was to have been the nursery into a smoking-room, and was looking tired and sad.

"You must not stir off the sofa this afternoon; I shall get Miss Chloe to see that you don't," said Crofton anxiously. He had come in search of his wife and had found her surreptitiously weeping on a divan.

Chloe was almost her old self during luncheon ; she rattled on about Italy and the Johnsons, but although she was evidently genuinely pleased to see Dorothy and to be in Paul's old home, her high spirits were assumed, and as she thought that this dear old-fashioned house, of which Paul was so fond, would have been her home but for that terrible accident she could never bear to think of, the tears were very near her eyes.

After luncheon she and Dorothy went to the pretty drawing-room, and Dr. Crofton established his wife on a sofa, and having forbidden her to move till tea-time, left Chloe on guard in a rocking-chair by her side. At first the conversation turned on Mrs. Crofton's illness and grief at the loss of her baby, on her husband's love and anxiety on her account, and on the kindness of her brothers when she was so ill.

"I consider I owe my life to Paul ; Michael thinks so too ; he was always hopeful of my recovery, but Peter gave me up. Paul is so clever ; he was always the cleverer of the two naturally, only he was lazy and Peter was always ambitious and industrious," said Dorothy, feeling her way and trying to see if Chloe were interested in Paul.

"How is Mr. Dursley getting on ?" said Chloe, rocking herself gently backwards and forwards and looking very pale and fragile. She was dressed in white with some scarlet geraniums in her dress.

"Splendidly ; he will be one of the leading surgeons of the day ; he loves surgery, and no one can accuse him of not working now that he has found congenial employment. I think he overdoes it, and then these operations take it out of him ; he is so excited when he has a serious one, and then there comes a reaction after it is over, and he is depressed ; but he loves it."

"I am glad he is happy," said Chloe tentatively.

"My dear child, who said he was happy ? I don't consider him happy by any means. That excitement is not happiness ; it enables him to forget his private affairs while it lasts, but it is soon over, and then, as I said before, he feels the reaction, and I doubt if he really forgets. I know when I was at death's door he was obliged to leave me to perform an operation, a very grave one, and he would not open the telegrams about me that morning till the operation was over ; he never will read private letters if he has a serious operation to perform till after it is over. But

he told Michael he was thinking of me that day all the while. Dear Paul, I do wish he were happy," and Mrs. Crofton sighed and looked at Chloe's pale little face, but she could not see much of it just then, for Chloe was leaning back staring at the ceiling.

"Perhaps he will be some day," she said with a sigh.

"There is only one thing that would make Paul happy," said Dorothy, wishing Chloe would go on rocking and bring her face into view.

"What would make him happy?" said Chloe, still gazing at the ceiling.

"Chloe dear, you know as well as I do. Paul has not changed; he will never be happy till you are his wife," said Dorothy reproachfully.

"Oh, yes, he will. I shall die soon, next year, perhaps; I don't quite know when. I am going to ask Dr. Crofton how long he thinks I shall live," said Chloe, beginning to rock herself backwards and forwards.

"Chloe! Don't talk so," interrupted Dorothy.

"Why not? I am a creature of surprises. I never do quite what is expected of me. No one ever expected Chloe to die young. Chloe is going to do it, and a good job too; she has nothing to live for," and Chloe rocked faster and faster, till Dorothy's unstrung nerves could not bear it any longer.

"Chloe, I have something to say to you, if you would not mind coming nearer to me," said Dorothy in a weak voice.

Chloe sprang up, threw herself on the floor in an attitude half kneeling, half sitting, in front of Mrs. Crofton, and taking her hands in her own, said:

"How I must worry you, rocking like that. Dear Mrs. Crofton, I am so sorry."

"Call me Dorothy."

"Dorothy. What have you to say to me?"

"Something that will surprise you very much; but first of all I want to ask you one or two questions; but promise you won't be offended."

"I promise. I like you too well to be offended at anything you may say to me," said Chloe, pillowing her curly head on one hand and toying with Dorothy's left hand and its rings with the other.

"Well, is there any other obstacle to your marriage with Paul, except the one I know of?"

"Not that I am aware of; there had not need be another obstacle, this is great enough in all conscience," said Chloe, with a bitter little laugh.

"Suppose it were removed," said Dorothy.

"It never can be removed; it will kill me, but it will never be removed," said Chloe passionately, her little pale face all ablaze and quivering with emotion.

"It can be removed, Chloe," said Dorothy.

"Never," said Chloe, almost fiercely.

"I can remove it," said Dorothy gently, laying one hand caressingly on Chloe's short black curls.

"You remove it? How?" cried Chloe, slipping on to her knees and fixing her great black eyes imploringly on Dorothy's face.

"Promise me something first. I am going to trust a terrible secret to you, because it can remove that obstacle to Paul's happiness and yours. Promise me you will never betray that secret to any one except Paul?"

"I promise faithfully," said Chloe.

"Chloe, you know I have just looked death straight in the face. Well, when once we have done that we see things in a different light; I see this matter differently now, and instead of letting this secret go to the grave with me, I am going to tell it to you. Paul was in no way to blame for your dear father's death; he was as innocent of any mistake as I was," said Dorothy.

"Whose fault was it, then?" demanded Chloe.

"Not mine. I never made a mistake in making up a prescription in my life. I don't believe I ever could have done such a thing, because if ever I had the slightest doubt about anything I always asked Paul. He knew that or he would never have trusted me," said Dorothy, watching the effect of her words on Chloe, and observing the little face was beginning to assume a softer expression.

"But you made up the pills, didn't you?"

"True; but Peter wrote the prescription; he wrote scruples instead of grains. The mistake was his, and, to save him, Paul sacrificed his own happiness, like the true hero he is; and I

helped him to do so, like the misguided woman I was, till I had a husband to guide me," said Dorothy.

Chloe's great eyes opened wider and wider as Mrs. Crofton was speaking. At the conclusion of her speech Chloe sprang to her feet and, without uttering a word, rushed from the room into the hall.

"What can she be going to do?" thought Dorothy.

Some girls would have wept for joy at such news; some would have fainted; some would have shrieked; some would have thanked God; some would have protested it could not be true and they did not believe it.

But Chloe did none of these things. Never a doubt had she as to its truth. In a flash she understood everything—Sir Peter's mistake, Dorothy's competence, Paul's innocence and generosity, her own misjudgment and consequently harsh treatment of her lover; and her first feeling was neither joy nor gratitude, nor sorrow, nor even surprise, but anger, wild anger against herself.

Dorothy was not left long in wonder. In a minute Chloe returned from the hall, with a hunting-whip of Paul's in her hand, and rushing to Mrs. Crofton, she thrust it into her hand, exclaiming:

"Take it, Dorothy; beat me with it. Quick! Do you hear? Half kill me if you like; I deserve it." And she fell on her knees and hid her face in the sofa.

"Are you mad, Chloe?" exclaimed Dorothy in horror, as she threw the whip across the room.

"No; I am wicked. I am an odious, hard-hearted, uncharitable little brute; that's what I am, Dorothy. Dorothy, turn me out of the house; don't ever speak to me again. Tell me you hate me for spoiling his life."

"Chloe, dear child, you are not to blame——" began Dorothy.

"Not to blame! I am to blame. I ought to have known he was innocent. I ought to have known he would never have trusted you to dispense his medicines unless he was sure you could do it. Oh! I wonder if he will ever forgive me. Do you think he ever can, Dorothy?"

Mrs. Crofton looked at the little upturned face, with its great black eyes, now looking so pleadingly at her, and she had no manner of doubt as to what Paul would do. But just then the sound of wheels in the stable-yard met her ear.

"I am sure he will. But listen ; a carriage has just driven up ; it is your sisters. Chloe, put that hunting-crop out of sight before they come in."

Chloe sprang up, picked up the whip and rushed out of the room with it, and was dancing a breakdown in the middle of the hall when her sisters reached the hall door, which stood open.

"Chloe, how very unseemly," observed Augusta.

"Chloe, your delight seems a little overstrained if that is how you welcome us after a few hours' absence," said Constance.

Chloe's answer was a peal of laughter. The idea of her sisters' presence being the cause of her joy was too absurd. She laughed so she could not speak for a minute or two ; at last she recovered sufficiently to ask them to come and see Mrs. Crofton.

"This visit seems to have been most beneficial to Chloe, Mrs. Crofton," said Augusta.

"She was so very depressed at home ; now I am never so happy as I am at home ; that is the difference between us," said Constance.

"One of the differences, if you please, Constance," said Chloe demurely, touching her little curly head as if to indicate that her short raven locks were another difference ; certainly they were a contrast to Constance's smooth sandy plaits.

"I am afraid, Chloe, the flattery you have received abroad has rather spoilt you," said Augusta.

"Yes, I think so too ; so I propose going to London on Monday, to Bertha. I shall find my level in town, no doubt," said Chloe.

"Why, I wrote this morning to tell Bertha I cannot persuade you to go to her. Really, Chloe, you are very fickle," said Augusta.

"I can't deny it ; but I have changed my mind. I'll write—no, I won't—I'll telegraph to Bertha to expect me. I'll go and send a message at once. Dorothy, keep some tea for me," and Chloe rushed off, glad of any excuse to avoid sitting still, listening to Constance's and Bertha's solemn conversation.

Her high spirits were a mystery to her sisters. She returned to tea with Dr. Crofton, whom she teased mercilessly ; in fact she was like some wild thing, laughing, dancing, singing, almost weeping because she had not her violin with her to let off some of her exuberant joy on its strings, until at last sheer exhaustion



silenced her, and she lay back in the pony-carriage and scarcely spoke a word all the way home, only a smile of intense happiness. played round her mouth from time to time.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## SIR PETER ATTENDS CHLOE.

CHLOE'S telegram reached Lady Dursley just before dinner was announced, having taken nearly as long as a letter would have done in the transmission. Paul was dining with them strictly *en famille*, that he and Sir Peter might discuss some professional matter quietly afterwards.

"It is from Chloe, telling me to expect her on Monday. How very odd; I had a letter from Augusta half-an-hour ago, saying she could not persuade her to come to us," said Bertha.

"Well, my dear, she has changed her mind; it is a way women have, isn't it, Paul?" said Sir Peter.

"The telegram was sent from Lyneham; she must have been to see Dorothy," said Paul, to whom Bertha had handed the message.

"Yes, she was to lunch there to-day, Augusta said; she is looking so ill they had to call in Dr. Crofton," said Bertha.

"Chloe ill! What is the matter with her?" exclaimed Paul, who was pondering over what could have made her change her mind.

"Just look here, Paul. Two hours and a half has this thing been coming; it is monstrous. If I lived there, I'd kick up the deuce of a row about it," said Sir Peter, examining the telegram in his turn.

"A row is sufficiently clear, Peter; there is no need to emphasize it," said Bertha somewhat sententiously.

"Take her in to dinner, Paul, and thank your stars you have no wife to keep you in order," said Sir Peter.

"I wish to God I had one," said Paul feelingly, as he led Bertha to the dining-room, but the jurisdiction which Lady Dursley exercised over her husband did not extend to his brother, so his exclamation passed unrebuked.

"Well, my dear fellow, there are plenty to be had for the asking," said Sir Peter.

Mr. Dursley sighed profoundly, as he seated himself, and

then stroked his fair moustache, which with his beard he had allowed to grow again to distinguish him from Sir Peter, since the likeness between them led to so many mistakes.

"When does Chloe come, Bertha? On Monday, isn't it? We dine at the Malcolmsons' and Cecil is to be there; I wonder if he has got over his *penchant* for Chloe's black eyes."

"I shall not take Chloe; she will be tired after the journey as she is so delicate," said Lady Dursley, who was accustomed to settle all such matters.

Bertha had developed into almost a nice-looking woman; she had always been very ladylike-looking; now she was very well dressed, and her great happiness lent a certain beauty to her homely features, so that Mrs. Halkett would hardly have recognized the shy, gawky, sandy-haired girl in this self-possessed, happy-looking woman. Outwardly Lady Dursley was much improved by marriage, but her character was perhaps a shade less amiable. Great happiness seldom sanctifies; very few natures, and those only the very noblest, can bear great happiness without deteriorating; fortunately not many people are put to the test.

Bertha was just a trifle selfish, just a little less sympathetic than of old, just a little stiff where she had formerly been shy, just a little inclined to reprove the husband—who looked on her as a model of all the virtues—whom she worshipped, and in reality was subject to in all things great and small whenever it pleased him to exert his authority.

Sir Peter found his brother rather an inattentive listener to professional conversation that evening, and he rightly attributed his inattention to Chloe's proposed visit.

"I wonder what she means, after telling Bertha she could not see him, now suddenly to telegraph she is coming. Has Dorothy persuaded her to change her mind? It is quite on the cards," thought Sir Peter.

Paul was inwardly wondering the same thing; but Chloe's reported illness was also puzzling him. Was she only coming to be under Sir Peter's professional care? Was she alarmed about her health? Had Crofton got Dorothy to break to her that it was serious?

"Any big operation for next week, Paul?" interrupted Sir Peter.

"Yes, on Tuesday," answered Paul, proceeding to give further details of the case, and almost forgetting Chloe in his excitement.

Monday came and with it Chloe; she was tired with the journey, and looked so pale and fragile that Sir Peter announced his intention of overhauling her the next morning before any other patients were admitted.

"Chloe dear, what do you wish about seeing Paul while you are here? It shall be just as you like, dear; I can arrange it if you don't wish to see him," said Bertha.

"Oh, but, Bertha, I do want to see him; the sooner the better. When do you think he will come?" said Chloe.

"Not till he is asked, dear, while you are here. I told him what you said to me in Italy, and I know he would not pain you for the world by thrusting himself on you unless you wished it."

"But I do wish it now. When do you think I can see him?"

"I'll ask him to dine here to-morrow; Peter and I are going to the Malcolmsons to-night. I thought you would not care to go."

"No, I am too tired," said Chloe, inwardly deciding that she did not mean to wait twenty-four hours before she saw Paul.

"I shall write to him this evening when they are gone, and if my letter does not bring him here by ten o'clock I'll go straight back to Bilney to-morrow and die," she thought, as Bertha's maid unpacked her trunks. She then went to the nurseries to see the children, but they worried her, and she did not stay long; but flitted away to Bertha's room to see her dress and inspect her wardrobe. This, too, bored her, and she sank on to a sofa and criticized Bertha's toilette.

"You look quite charming, Bertha. I am glad I am not going; you would quite put your poor little sister in the shade. See how thin I am; I shall be positively ugly if I am alive six months hence at this rate; but I won't be ugly, I'll die or get well."

"Peter will cure you, Chloe, dear," said Bertha reassuringly.

"If I am to be cured it won't be Peter who will cure me," said Chloe in an under-tone, rubbing her cheeks with eau de Cologne before a mirror to get some colour into them and making faces at herself the while.

She was in such a restless mood she could not keep still for five consecutive minutes; she saw Sir Peter and his wife start in their close carriage for the Malcolmsons' dinner party, and then

she went and played with her own dinner and made Drummond shake his head at her want of appetite. Then she ran up to her bedroom, locked herself in and sat down to compose a letter to Paul. She wrote three letters one after the other, but they none of them satisfied her and she tore them all up. Then she tried again, writing as fast as her pen would travel, and this was the result:

"PAUL! Paul, who might have been my Paul had I not been a conceited little idiot, a hard-hearted little stone. I am ill and I am sent here for Peter to cure me, but there is only one person in the world can do that, and it is not Peter.

"I came home from Italy because I was ill, but I never meant to come to London till last Saturday, when I lunched with Dorothy, and she told me *everything* about my dearest father's death. Before that, wild horses would not have dragged me here; after I knew it I have scarcely been still for an hour till I got here. And now I am here I shall have no peace till I see you. If you don't come by ten I shall know you cannot forgive me, and I shall go back to Bilney at once. Paul, it was lovely of you, perfectly lovely, but you ought to have told me; you ought to have trusted Chloe.

"Why didn't you?

"Oh, to-morrow, will it ever come?

"Good night, Paul,

"CHLOE."

"I shan't read it; if I do I shall never dare to send it, so I'll just do it up and slip it on to the hall table with all Peter's letters and then it will be posted to-night, and Paul will get it at breakfast to-morrow; and if I know him he will be here soon after. It is now half-past nine, nearly twelve whole hours before I can see him. They will be longer than the years I was in Italy, for I am too much excited to sleep." Thus thinking, Chloe ran downstairs with her letter and presently went to bed.

She was restless and excited and slept but little till about six o'clock, when she fell into a sound sleep, and would fain have slept on after she was called, only the thought of Paul and the hope of seeing him made her get up.

Breakfast was at half-past eight, but Chloe could not touch

hers, and Sir Peter shook his head as he noticed how ill she looked and told her she was to go to his consulting room at ten o'clock.

"What time does the postman come in the morning?" was Chloe's irrelevant answer.

"About eight."

"And is a letter posted last night sure to be delivered in London by the first post?"

"Yes; why, are you expecting any letters?" asked Bertha.

"No," said Chloe, who was wondering if Paul had read her letter yet; perhaps he got up late. She wished she could ask what time he breakfasted, and oh, how she hoped he would come and prevent her going to Sir Peter to have her heart and lungs tried.

She hardly expected him before nine, but nine o'clock struck and no Paul arrived; half-past nine came and still no message and no Paul. Then Chloe began to get alarmed. Perhaps he did not mean to come; perhaps he did not mean to forgive her; perhaps he had ceased to care for her. If so, how dreadfully forward he would think her; how should she ever survive it if he took no notice of her letter?

A quarter to ten, and still no sign from Paul. How cruel of him. Even if he no longer loved her, he might send a note to say he bore no malice.

And he was to dine there that evening. Bertha had promised to ask him. No doubt the invitation was gone; she could not meet him. Nothing should induce her to do so. She must go back to Bilney. She would go that afternoon; no one should prevent her.

Ten o'clock! Still no Paul. Evidently he did not mean to come. Evidently he meant her to go home. Well, she would go. She would tell Sir Peter so, and as Drummond then appeared to inform her his master was waiting for her, she rushed into the consulting-room.

"Peter, I must go home this afternoon. I can't stop another day. Never mind my health. You can't do me any good. I shall die. I must die. I want to die. I will die. I won't take any medicines. I won't eat. I won't do anything you tell me to do. I don't want to live. I want to die. Let me go and pack up and go home;" and Chloe, who had been standing by Sir Peter's side during this speech, turned to go away.

To her surprise, he laid a hand on each shoulder, turned her round, and held her gently but firmly as he looked steadily at her and said very gravely :

"Chloe! What is the meaning of all this?"

Chloe's answer was to burst into a fit of sobbing. She buried her curly head in her hands and sobbed bitterly.

Sir Peter put one arm round her neck, and stroked the little bent head with his other hand.

"Come, come, come, my dear child. Don't cry so. Tell me all about it. I am your brother, you know, as well as a doctor, and doctors receive as many confessions as priests in this country. Tell me what it is all about. Is it a love affair?"

"I can't tell you. I wish I could. Only let me go home before this evening," pleaded Chloe.

"You are not fit to travel, you know. Besides, you have only just come. Are you tired of us so soon? Stay a week. You shall do just as you like, only you must try and eat. I won't have any starving. That is all nonsense. Stay and let me see if I can't do you a little good. You go and lie down for a little while, and this afternoon we will have a drive, and you see if you can't tell me what's the matter. Perhaps I can help you," said Sir Peter kindly.

"No; it is hopeless. No one can help me. I can't stay. I must go home to-day if I die on the way," said Chloe.

"You are not going to die at all; at least, not at present. Now, you know, I know what is the matter with you. It is a love affair, and you had better make up your mind to tell me all about it this afternoon. I am going to see Paul first; he has a bad operation to perform this morning, but that will be over at half-past twelve. I'll fetch you at three."

"An operation to-day! Are you sure?" exclaimed Chloe, her whole manner changing in a flash.

"Quite sure. I have just sent round a verbal message to ask if he'll dine here this evening, because he never opens any letters before he operates, so he won't get Bertha's invitation," said Sir Peter, wondering why Chloe was so much excited.

"Peter! you are a dear, darling old thing. You are the very nicest doctor in the world, and the nicest possible brother. I will stay till to-morrow, at any rate, and perhaps I'll tell you something this afternoon, and perhaps I shan't die after all," cried



Chloe, shaking Sir Peter's hands in both hers and then kissing them one after the other.

Then she rushed to the door, but danced back again and, making an elaborate courtesy before him, said :

"Sir Peter Dursley, what a clever doctor you are. You have almost cured Chloe."

*(To be concluded.)*

## Michael Angelo.

### HIS ART AND THE TIME IN WHICH HE LIVED.

MICHAEL ANGELO BUONAROTTI is more representative of the Renaissance than any of his contemporaries. Strong, magnificent, enthusiastic, glowing with the fiery ardour of a new life and filled with the sense of the possibilities and powers of his time. What a world of wonder and suggestion the word Renaissance conjures up. Re-birth: the new life, the soul, sent to revivify the dead body of art and learning, which had lain so long inert.

What was, or, rather, what caused the Renaissance, the second birth? It is difficult to understand, and still more difficult to define. Roughly speaking, I should trace it to the Arabian influence creeping into Sicily; their brilliant fancies, graceful taste and gorgeous imagination. Also, possibly, that the painters of the Christian era, dissatisfied with their own unaided efforts, traced back, sought for, and resuscitated their vague memories of Greek and Roman antique art.

The Renaissance was sudden. Whether the desire for better things and higher culture had been long present, though dormant, in Italian hearts and intellects, the final piercing of the darkness with the rosy gleam of early dawn came suddenly, swiftly, as such dawns do come. Have you never lain awake through a long, dark, dreary night, longing and praying for the first gleam of light, till in very tiredness and heart-sickness you close your eyes one tiny moment, and lo! as you open them in almost an instant, as it appears to you, the dawn is at hand; and the glorious sun, tinting in its new-born splendour all earthly things, fills you with the joy of life, and dreams of all that may be accomplished, of all the victories to be won. Dante and Giotto were the first to usher in this lovely dawn of a still more perfect day. They are followed by many a great and well-known name: Brunelleschi—Ghiberti—Columbus—Gutenberg—Luther and Savonarola, each fulfilling their peculiar mission; some in art, awakening the imagination, and opening the eyes of the blind to perceive the beauties surrounding them; some push-

ing fortunes and discoveries in new worlds ; some rousing and nerving to fresh effort the dead or dying conscience into second birth ; others spreading knowledge, erasing ignorance, shining light on the dark places of life. To all those who prepared the way for the glories that should be we owe grateful memories and tender thoughts. To the victory of this fight with the evil things of darkness, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Michael Angelo came forward with their strength and genius.

Michael Angelo Buonarrotti, born at the Castle of Caprese, on the 6th of March, 1474, of noble parents, who from pride of race objected to their son following the profession of artist, became the sculptor of "Moses," painter of "The Last Judgment" in the Sixtine Chapel, architect of the cupola of St. Peter's, Rome, and constructor of the fortifications at Florence, when he responded to the unanimous request of the citizens to do so in a time of danger. A marvellous achievement ; in its way almost as great as the magnificent cupola, which would alone suffice for the glory of a life. For what knowledge could Michael Angelo, poet, painter, sculptor and architect, have of military engineering ? Yet with absolute confidence the people turned to him in their trouble and anxiety, sure of sympathy, and equally sure that the marvellous genius would find a mode of defence. His parents' fear that he would cast a stain upon their ancient lineage was curiously unprophetic ; for through Michael Angelo, and him alone, is their name remembered, or held in honour among men. That he disregarded the indignation of his parents, and even the adverse horoscope they caused to be cast for him, is a proof of the forceful power that urged him to take his life into his own hands. Leonardo would not hear of his son studying art as a profession, considering it would be degrading and a reflection on his family ; and Michael Angelo was hampered in his pursuit, and his inclinations thwarted in every possible way ; he was often, Condivi says, "scolded and even terribly flogged." Leonardo Buonarrotti was far from being a wealthy man. The income he derived from his property at Sittignano was barely sufficient to support his large family. Several of his children he put into the silk and woollen trade ; but perceiving that Michael Angelo was possessed of remarkable abilities, he sent him to a grammar school in Florence, kept by Francesco da Urbino. Michael Angelo, however, made absolutely no progress at this

school; his one great talent lay in drawing, and every spare moment was devoted to adorning the walls of his father's house with wonderful pictures. These first attempts were in existence in the middle of the eighteenth century. Yori says that the Cavaliere Buonarrotti, a descendant of Michael Angelo's uncle, showed him one of these early achievements drawn in chalk upon the wall of a staircase in the villa of Sittignano, which represented a man with his right arm uplifted and his head thrown back; it showed much promise of genius, the design being bold, full of life and giving earnest of his future mastery in art and grandeur of conception.

Michael Angelo about this period formed a strong friendship with a boy of his own age, Francesco Granacci, a pupil of Ghirlandajo, who lent him studies by his master, and by steady perseverance and tenacity of purpose, Michael Angelo at last overcame his father's opposition; he was only fourteen at this time, and it is said that a contract was drawn up and concluded with the author of the frescoes of Santa Maria Novella, by which the boy was to be received for three years into his studio, and was to be paid twenty-four gold florins; a very curious and most unusual arrangement, the ordinary custom being for the pupil to pay for instruction; in this case the master seems to have agreed to pay the boy for the privilege of teaching him. This contract is, I believe, dated 1489. It was in this beautiful church of Santa Maria Novella, which later on he calls "his bride," under the guidance of one of the most famous artists of his time, that Michael Angelo gave himself up to the delights of painting. He made such wonderful and rapid progress that it was very shortly after he entered the studio, Ghirlandajo said of him, "This young fellow knows more about it than I do." If we are to believe Condivi, it was not without jealousy the great master saw him correct his own drawings and those of his pupils with a sure hand. Some critics attribute to Michael Angelo, when only fifteen, the fine picture in *tempera* which was exhibited in Manchester some few years ago. But even such precocity as he showed scarcely explains such science and maturity of skill. It bears indisputable evidence of being authentic, certain traits of Michael Angelo's, such as making the feet too small and the *nez retroussés* of the children; but it appears probable the picture was not the work of his early years of study, and though certain

details recall Ghirlandajo's manner, they do not warrant the belief that the picture is the work of so youthful an artist. It is more probable that it was not executed till after Michael Angelo had left the studio, and had matured his genius and refined and invigorated his taste by the study of Masaccio's frescoes and the antiques in the garden of St. Mark's, during those years of early manhood about which we know so little, but which must have been a period of close application to the mastery of technique, and rich in the results of minute observation and unwearied effort. During these years of study he must have gained power and ease in treatment, and that spiritual insight which is the outcome of delicate perception.

While a pupil in the studio of Domenico and David Ghirlandajo, by whom he was received without premium, in less than three years he showed signs of wonderful talent, especially in his picture of St. Antony beaten by devils. He was soon taken notice of by that patron of arts in Florence, Lorenzo de Medici, whose attention was first attracted to the young artist by the famous Faun's Head, to which he had given by a few touches an expression of human laughter. Lorenzo at this time had thrown open to the people of Florence his extensive gardens filled with busts and statues, which became a favourite resort of the youthful genius; and from this time Michael Angelo was given to the care of the Medici family, who undertook his education and advancement in life. His progress was, however, sadly interrupted by the death of his patron Lorenzo, whose brother and successor, Pietro, cared but little for the fine arts; indeed, made a mock at them by forcing Buonarotti to model statues in snow, evidently with a view of marking his contempt both for the artist and his art. Yet we may fancy how lovely these pure, fairy, but evanescent creations must have been in such master hands. Dream children foreshadowing the realities and achievements of his riper years.

Pietro de Medici, though possessing many brilliant external qualities, gave great offence by his want of tact and courtesy. His arrogance became daily more insupportable, and made him many enemies. The popular party was aroused against him, and his fall was imminent; Savonarola looked towards Charles VIII. Michael Angelo, from his feeling of reverence and gratitude to the family, was very unwilling to fight against him; but being

unable to preserve a strict neutrality, he left Florence and went to Venice. Finding nothing to interest him in that city he went to Bologna, where he was introduced to one of the sixteen members of the governing council—Aldovrandi—who soon procured him work, detaining him for more than a year, showing him every respect and attention, and "charmed by his perfect pronunciation, making him read Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and other Tuscan poets." Michael Angelo returned to Florence in 1495, and besides the small statue of St. John, sculptured the famous "Sleeping Cupid," which was the occasion of his first visit to Rome. There is a rather curious story connected with this statue on which some of his biographers lay almost too much stress. "Lorenzo, son of Piero Francesco de Medici, having seen this work, and being struck by its great beauty, advised Michael Angelo to try and give it a look of age by burying it in the ground and then to send it to Rome, where it would certainly pass for an antique, and where he would get more money for it than he could in Florence. Cardinal San Giorgio was caught in the snare, and bought the statue; but, hearing that he had been the dupe of a fraud, he sent one of his gentlemen to discover the author, and, furious at having been deceived, broke the bargain and took back the money. Such is the version of the story given by Vasari, who, nevertheless, seems not to believe that Michael Angelo had lent himself to the trick, and adds that, notwithstanding his anger, the cardinal persuaded Michael Angelo to visit Rome, where, it is true, he left him a year without employing him." According to Condivi, the gentleman sent by the cardinal, "having asked Michael Angelo to let him see some of his works to prove to him that he was really the author of the statue, Michael Angelo, with a few strokes of the pen, drew a hand that convinced him. Mariette believes he possesses this drawing, which he got from the Crozat collection. It is now in the gallery of the Louvre; but its authenticity is more than doubtful, and it is now attributed to Passarotti. It was engraved by the Count de Caylus." Michael Angelo had, however, no mind to shirk the realities of life, however intense or tragic they might prove to be. Feeling himself fit for higher things than ministering to the caprice of a sensual and volatile debauchee, or of playing with life, or prostituting his genius in the service of slothful ease or sensual gratifications, he accepted a commission to paint two pictures



of the Crucifixion for the Conventual Church of the Holy Spirit at Florence. Always devout, he threw himself heart and soul into this work; and to be thoroughly realistic in his art, he craved and obtained permission to have the coffins of the newly buried opened and laid beside him in the night, so that he might study and faithfully portray the awful characteristics of death. A fearful and awe-inspiring expedient, one which shows the deep earnestness of the man, and the self-sacrificing absorption of the artist. That this terrible study made a deep and lasting impression is proved by the words which fell from his lips at the moment of death, in his eighty-ninth year: "In your passage through life, bear always in mind the sufferings of Christ." Words suggestive not only of the horror and awe with which the contemplation of those sufferings inspired him, but of the reverent love and high ideal which guided him through life.

Michael Angelo remained in Rome from 1496 to 1501. What was his work in those years, still in early manhood and already famous? Surely the four statues which date from this period and which are known to us, are not the sole achievements of these years of force and energy. These four statues are the Bacchus, the Cupid of the Kensington Museum, the Adonis of the Uffigi at Florence, and the Pietà, now at St. Peter's. These belong, without doubt, to this period of his first residence in Rome; and also four of the fifteen figures ordered by Cardinal Piccolomini for the library of the Duomo of Siena appear to have been accomplished, but we have little reliable information on this point. The Pietà of St. Peter's points more decidedly the path which the genius of Michael Angelo was about to break than any of his previous works. "Marble no longer expresses beauty simply in an abstract and general manner: carved by a powerful hand, it will henceforth translate ideas and feelings. 'The greatest artist can conceive nothing that the marble does not comprise within itself; but it needs a hand obedient to thought to draw it forth.' The obedient hand already strives to make the stone say what it had never said before. This virgin has the youthful and austere beauty peculiar to Michael Angelo's women. The body of the Christ extended upon the lap of the mother, appears to suffer even in the repose of death the tortures that the Divine Man had been enduring. The legs, the articulations, the extremities, are of irreproachable beauty; a forecast

of the most perfect and characteristic works of the master. This Pietà was a great event in Rome. We can fancy, however, that these very marked expressions, these *eloquent bodies*, must have excited some astonishment. Vasari confines himself to treating as fools those who pretended that Michael Angelo had given the Virgin too much an air of youth, while giving the Christ his real age. Condivi, less brief and less scornful, transmits the explanation which he had from Michael Angelo himself: 'Do you not know,' said he to me, 'that chaste women preserve their youth much longer than those that are not so? How much truer is this of a virgin that never had a touch of carnal desire that could taint her body! . . . It is quite otherwise with the Son of God, because I wished to show that he really took a man's body and that, excepting sin, he suffered all human miseries.'" This Pietà is the only one of Michael Angelo's works that has his signature.

Some Milanese came to look at the group and made remarks about it before him. One of them asked who was the sculptor, and the answer was: "Il Gobbino, of Milan." Michael Angelo took no notice at the time, but returned late at night with a lantern and a small chisel and cut his name upon the girdle of the Virgin. Michael Angelo from this time became intoxicated with his art, and, growing greater and greater every day, climbed the highest summits, his Titanic imagination, with extraordinary temerity, going to marvellous lengths, even to excess. Yet he never lost the instinct for beauty which is natural to all men. With him it was the beauty of grandeur, of awe-inspiring magnificence, in a word, of the sublime, that influenced him most. Classic in the truest sense: in simplicity, in purity of outline, in that it appeals to the unchanging sense for beauty in the human soul which underlies all transient fancies for the new or peculiar; in qualities which do not appeal merely to a day or generation, or a passing mood, but to the eternal craving after perfection in all men. Michael Angelo's art appeals to that idea of beauty which is not individual, but universal, therefore it satisfies and raises us beyond mere every-day sensations; carries us through and beyond the material body of realistic art to the soul, the element of the divine in nature and in man.

The only authentic easel picture by Michael Angelo is "The Virgin of the Tribune," painted at Florence, 1502-1504. He is

reported to have said that oil painting was only fit for women. His power as a painter is known by the ceiling of the Sixtine Chapel in Rome. At about this time he showed his determination to throw off the shackles of the liturgical paintings of the middle ages by introducing nude figures, a departure from former custom which gave some offence, and outraged the sensibilities of the more severely religious. It was, however, in his cartoon of the "Battle of Pisa" that Michael Angelo proved beyond a doubt his marvellous skill. The anatomical knowledge, boldness of design, and the masterly drawing astonished all who saw it. Benvenuto Cellini says that not even in the painting of the Sixtine ceiling did Michael Angelo show such inspiration. There is very little doubt that Buonarrotti had a very strong influence upon Raphael, who considerably altered his style after seeing and being under the influence of the great Florentine. In 1503 Julius II. invited Michael Angelo to Rome, and gave him an order for a plan of a mausoleum so magnificent as to exceed anything of the kind before erected. He commenced the design, of which Julius approved, and then went to Carrara, where he remained eight months, and during that time he was by no means idle, but blocked out two figures while there. The marbles arrived in Rome, and Julius was so interested in the work he had a covered way made from his palace to the studio, and went frequently to talk to Michael Angelo about the tomb. Michael Angelo was greatly wearied with this intimacy, and with his usual impatience and fiery ardour resented interference; and made the most of a temporary coolness on the part of Julius, to show his displeasure and put an end to so burdensome a patronage. Vasari gives the following account of what occurred: "While Michael Angelo was engaged on the works, a cargo of Carrara marble arrived at Ripa, and was conveyed to the piazza of St. Peter's. As it was necessary to pay the bargemen, Michael Angelo went, according to his custom, to the Pope for the money. On that day his Holiness was seriously occupied with the affairs of Bologna. Our artist paid the bill out of his own purse, counting on being soon reimbursed. Some time after he returned to the palace to speak to the Pope on the subject, but he found the same difficulty to gain admission. A valet told him to have patience; that he had orders to let no one in. 'But,' said a bishop, who was present,

'don't you know the person whom you are refusing?' 'I know him very well, but I am here to execute the orders of his Highness,' replied the valet. Michael Angelo, to whom hitherto all doors had been open, indignant at such a reception, said to the valet: 'When the Pope next wants me he will have to seek me elsewhere.' Returning home at two o'clock in the morning he gave orders to two of his servants to sell his furniture to the Jews, and to follow him to Florence. He mounted horse, and never stopped till he reached Poggibouzi, upon the Florentine territory. He had hardly arrived when five couriers, one after the other, came charged with the most urgent letters from the Pope, enjoining his instant return to Rome on pain of incurring his disgrace. Invitations, threats were all in vain. The couriers, by their entreaties, could obtain from him only a letter to the Pope, begging him to excuse him for not again appearing in his presence, but having been treated in the unworthy manner he had been, as the reward of his services and attachment, his Holiness must find another sculptor." Julius was extremely angry, and ordered the Florentines to send back the fugitive; but no orders, no entreaties were of any avail, Michael Angelo would not return. However, after a considerable time, a pressing letter of entreaty, written by the Cardinal of Volterra in the Pope's name, to the Signory of Florence, decided Michael Angelo to return. An account of their first interview, subsequent to the quarrel, has been preserved in Condivi's narrative, as follows:—"Michael Angelo, having arrived at Bologna, in the morning went to San Petronio to hear mass. He there met some officers of the Pope's household, who conducted him to his Holiness. The Pope was at table in the palace of the Sixtine. When he was brought into his presence the Pope said, with an angry countenance, 'You have had to come to us, and you expected that we would have had to go for you.' Michael Angelo knelt, apologized, and earnestly assured him that he had not acted from a malicious motive, but simply from indignation that he had not been able to bear patiently, being driven away as he had been. The Pope kept his head bent down without making any reply, and appeared much agitated. Then a bishop, who had been charged by Soderini to make excuses for Michael Angelo, and to present him, interposed, and said, 'Pardon him, your Holiness; he has sinned through ignorance. These

painters know no better.' The Pope flew into a rage with the bishop, saying, 'You use abusive language, which I don't. It is you that are ignorant ; you insult him. Get out of my sight !' And as the bishop did not go, he was pushed out of the room by the attendants." \*

The Pope having thus discharged most of his wrath upon the bishop invited Michael Angelo to approach him, pardoned him, and gave him his benediction, enjoining him not to quit Bologna till he had given him a commission. After a short time he sent for him and ordered a colossal statue of himself in bronze, which he wished to place in the façade of San Petronio. Michael Angelo finished this statue in sixteen months ; it was three times the natural size. The mausoleum to Julius was a source of great annoyance and worry to Michael Angelo. After many interruptions he found it impossible to complete the whole design. The statue of Moses, the most imposing of all the figures, is entirely by him. Two of the figures, personifying Active life and Contemplative life, are partly by him, but were finished by Raphael ; and also two others by this master, a Madonna, after a model by Michael Angelo, and the figure of Julius, by Meso del Bosco. This monument was not finished till 1550. The figures appear too large for the place they occupy ; and that of Moses, being the most imposing, is misleading, giving the idea that the monument was erected in memory of the Hebrew lawgiver rather than to Julius. In 1508, Michael Angelo began the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, the most magnificent and transcendent of his undertakings. It took him four years to complete the Sistine frescoes. At first he was fearfully discouraged by the misty appearance of the painting ; but it was found to be due to bad lime, and the mistake was easily rectified. These paintings are awe-inspiring and terribly beautiful. On a gigantic scale, it is hard to remember they are the work of a man and not of a god. Michael Angelo has been compared unfavourably with Raphael as lacking in tenderness of feeling and delicacy of execution ; but the figures of Adam and Eve in the Sistine paintings leave nothing to be desired in this particular ; they are chaste, graceful and beautiful.

The "Last Judgment" is considered by many the most

\* Others say the Pope struck him himself.

marvellous of all the extraordinary creations of this great man. Begun in 1533, it was not finished till 1541, eight years of incessant labour. It has been remarked that this grand fresco is more the work of a sculptor than a painter. In no other work are the merits and the faults of his genius so pronounced; never was so magnificent, so awe-inspiring, never so little pleasing or desirous to charm. He piled up violent postures, extreme gestures and excesses of all kinds; yet never did he scale such heights to win immortal fame. This fresco produced a great effect and gave rise to considerable scandal, by its nude figures and violent attitudes and contortions. Even friends of Michael Angelo found serious fault with the ignoring of the Christian idea, and the insistence of a gigantic humanity; many blamed him, and Aretino wrote to Enea Vico that "this picture might well have its author placed among Lutherans." The Pope was not scandalized, but took things more cheerfully. One day he went to visit the works at the Sixtine, accompanied by Biagio da Cesena, his master of the ceremonies; he asked him what he thought of the picture. Biagio replied that he thought it deplorable they should have put into so sacred a place, figures exhibiting their nakedness in this shameless fashion, and that they were fitter for a *bagnio* or a pothouse than for the Pope's chapel. Michael Angelo heard him, and as soon as he was alone he put the unfortunate master of the ceremonies among the damned, under the features of Minos. The likeness was so striking that the story soon got abroad. Biagio came with his grievance to the Pope, who asked where Michael Angelo had put him.

"In hell," he answered.

"Alas!" replied Paul, laughing, "if he had put you in purgatory I might have got you out; but since you are in hell, my power not extending so far, I can do nothing. *Nulla est redemptio.*"

Michael Angelo was obliged to rest during the year that followed this great work. His eyesight was sadly strained, and injured from being obliged to keep so constantly looking upwards, and this interval of repose was a very happy one. The old Pope, who was greatly attached to him, in spite of his impetuous and furious outbursts of occasional rage, showered favours on the famous artist, and surrounded him with attentions.



Michael Angelo had a great love and admiration for Dante, and besides illustrating with numerous drawings a copy of the "Divine Comedy," which was unfortunately lost in the wreck of the vessel it was in, also entreated to be allowed to execute a monument to him in the city of Florence. But alas! Pope Leo would not entertain the project, and it was abandoned. Leo X. died Dec. 1521, a year after Raphael. He was succeeded by the austere Adrian, who knew nothing of pictures, and now this great art era was drawing to a close. Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci were both dead, and Michael Angelo survived alone; grand, majestic in his desolation, his aloneness, too often the destiny of great genius. Of all isolation that of intellect is the most pathetic, the most hopeless, because the most profound. Michael Angelo's character, always sombre, had grown with his advancing age still more gloomy and misanthropic. His love of solitude became intensified as he found fewer and fewer worthy of his friendship or esteem; and now during the great Republican struggle in Florence for the expulsion of the Medici, 1529, he was torn by conflicting feelings. His hatred and scorn for the later Medici was at war with his early love and feeling of profound gratitude to Lorenzo, his first patron and sincere friend. However, at the entreaty of the people, he accepted the appointment of governor and commissary-general of the fortifications, and fortified the city at all points; feeling that a man's first duty is to be a good citizen, he determined that his people's confidence should not be misplaced. Unfortunately, however, numbers of the citizens had become sensuous, inert, during the reign of the luxurious and profligate Medici, and clamoured for a return to the lusts of the flesh. Famine also decimated the defenders, and the city capitulated on the 12th of August, 1530.

Michael Angelo escaped by remaining for some time in concealment, and was eventually pardoned by the Pope on condition that he would complete the tomb of San Lorenzo. At this time he fell into bad health; loss of appetite and insomnia soon undermined his health, and work was forbidden him, except that on the tomb. It was years, fifteen or so, since he had touched his chisel, and he returned to his sculpturing with ardour. As he grew old, however, he became yet more impatient and irritable, and though attentive in some instances to the most minute detail, he often merely hastily sketched some of his

figures and left them in a very unfinished condition. It was in 1532 he returned to Rome and completed the painting of the Sixtine, by his memorable "Last Judgment," which took him eight years, and was not finished till the Christmas, 1541. The work is unique, said by some to be the work of a sculptor rather than a painter, and to be inferior to the *ceiling* of the Sixtine Chapel. Yet although it is in its character violent, exaggerated, and tending to excess, never did he reach such a height of grandeur and exaltation. His last fresco paintings were the two pictures representing the Conversion of St. Paul and the Crucifixion of St. Peter; he was about seventy-five at this time, and these frescoes have the faults and exaggerations incident to his age. When unable to paint, he began by way of healthful recreation his "Christ taken down from the Cross," and the vigour and energy shown by him in this was amazing. He undertook, however, no more in either painting or sculpture, but devoted himself to his duties as architect in directing the buildings of St. Peter's. So far I have not mentioned his poetic talent, which was of a high order, though not so perfect in degree as his other gifts. Still his ideas were pure and exalted, and his language correct and dignified. His deep attachment to the Marchioness of Pescara had a profound influence on him and completed his life. The memory of Vittoria Colonna is inseparable from that of Michael Angelo; and it was his intense love for her and the pure passionate memory he retained of her that cast a halo of light and beauty on his old age. In 1556 he lost his faithful and valued servant Urbino. "He loved him so," says Vasari, "that he nursed him through his illness, and sat up with him at night." There is a touching picture by the late Lord Leighton, representing this incident. In 1562, Michael Angelo's health began to grow rapidly worse, and feeling the end was near, he dictated this will in the presence of his doctor, Donati, and some other friends: "I resign my soul to God, my body to the earth, and my earthly possessions to my nearest of kin." He died on the 7th February, 1563, aged eighty-eight years, eleven months, and fifteen days. So three centuries and thirty-three years ago, this greatest and almost superhuman genius passed away from a world in which he had found but little happiness. At war all his life with the trivialities and impertinences of men, striving all his life to purify, to elevate, or to terrify into more serious thought

those indolent, sensuous, profligate Florentines and Italians of his age; disappointed with his political efforts, never satisfied with his achievements in art, and only cheered in his old age by the pure and absorbing passion that warmed his old heart and stirred his morose nature into something like simple, manly, human devotion for a woman "whose soul was like a star." His funeral was indeed a national mourning. All the painters, sculptors and architects assembled to do honour to their master, and vied with each other for the privilege of carrying the body to its last resting-place in Santa Croce. So passed this last and greatest of the giants of those days. He closes the movement inaugurated by Dante and Giotto, carried on by Orcagna, Brunelleschi and Leonardo, and those who came after him in trying to follow in his footsteps all too frequently forgot that genius does not lie in mere exaggeration, but that spasmodic violence without enduring power and spiritual exaltation is worthless.

By the side of Dante, Leonardo, Brunelleschi and Raphael, Michael Angelo was a Titan; of him in art might be said what Lamb remarked of Shakespeare, "How much of Shakespeare shines in the great men his contemporaries, and how far in his divine mind and manners he surpassed them and all mankind."

MAI DEAN.

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## A Bad Dream.

By ETHEL F. HEDDLE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### JOYCE.

JOYCE MACPHAIL stood at the gate of the Assistant Resident's house, looking down the river. The river—it was called the Kali Bodgaur—was growing rather indistinct, for in Java twilight is of brief duration, and the dark comes, if not exactly "*with one stride*," yet with extreme rapidity, and fire-flies were beginning to sparkle with their tiny golden lamps over the grassy bank, thickly strewn now with a kind of flame-coloured lily, whose name Joyce had not yet learnt. The Resident's house stood behind her; it was empty, for the government official had just left and the new one had not been appointed, and the garden was growing just a little wild. Just before the gate there stood a huge fan-banana—its smooth leaves spreading out like a lady's fan—behind was a row of gorgeous sun-flowers, which had fairly dazzled the eye in the fierce glow of daylight, but were ghost-like now; the plots were full of red roses, clambering with long arms everywhere, and the borders were a riot of luscious-smelling tuberoses, gebungsepatus and begonias. Growing from the trunk of the tree which shaded the side gate, Joyce had just been admiring the starry white flowers of some wonderful orchids; she was fond of coming here in the dusk, just before her husband returned from the mill; the long hot day being past, the night felt deliciously cool and breezy. She had wandered all about the Resident's inclosure. There was an artificial pond in the shrubbery behind, upon which lay the huge green leaves and long roots of a magnificent Victoria Regia lily. The pond had almost dried up, and the tray-like leaves, curved up at the edges, rested on the oozy brown mud, the exquisite white bud just opening where a little stream trickled up from a hidden spring. Joyce had seen just the same lily in the Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh—how long ago? and she had little imagined she would see

it next in Java! In those days she had had but a misty idea, indeed, where Java was. I doubt if she could have told you to whom it belonged. Women's geography is apt to be vague. She was thinking of the day on which she had seen the Victoria Radia, as she stood now, under a huge "waringi" tree, looking over the river to the sky line, where a row of cocoanut palms were silhouetted against the last pale light in the sky. Cocoanut palms, with their sharp delicate leaves and the soft irregular outline of the bamboos—how familiar they were to her now, though she had only been about six months in Java; as familiar, she thought, as the beeches and elms and stern unbending firs of far-off Scotland. Even the magnificent waringi tree under which she stood (it is the holy tree of Java) seemed quite familiar. It grows to an immense height, has leaves of a cool dark green, and long brown streamers like the loose plaits of a fakir's hair, which, when they reach the ground, root themselves there; Joyce swayed some of the tough tendrils in her hand now, as she meditated. "The Botany class was at eight o'clock, and the boys had always such a battle to get there! I saw the lily with—yes, with *him*! Poor Hugh!"

Another long breath. She did not often think now of Hugh Perceval. They had been lovers, and privately betrothed, but Hugh had gone away, and after a little had written that "the engagement was hopeless—he dared not bind her to him—science meant starvation," and, without a word, Joyce had returned the little ring with its pearl and coral centre. She told herself then she did not blame him. Science did mean starvation very often, and she never put into words the subtle contempt she felt for the man who could throw up the battle, and did not love her enough to fight and conquer for her sake! A few years, and then she met Herman MacPhail. He came from Java, and was in Europe for a year's holiday. His grandfather had been a Scotchman, who, coming out to the colony at a time when fortunes were made there rapidly, fell upon his feet in the way Scotchmen have, and married a Dutch lady. Fortune favoured him, and tobacco paid well, but the MacPhails were Dutch of the Dutch now, in all but name, and it was Herman's first visit to the land of his fathers. He was a big, handsome, genial man, of about forty, talking English remarkably well, prosperous and good-humoured, and he fell in love with Joyce's grey eyes and sweet

direct glance, and after a little he persuaded her to marry him. Six months ago they returned to Java, and travelled into the interior, where MacPhail was administrator of a large sugar mill. Joyce had led rather a stormy and worried life at home, fighting hand to hand with poverty, and growing rather tired of teaching and the rest, and the change of her new life seemed to set every nerve in tune and ease that stinging pain, which was wont to ache like an old bullet wound at times and seasons when memory, pointing backward, bade her remember her brief sweet love story. The lily made her think of it to-night, and the time went oddly fast, as she stood there, and the moon rose slowly, a large pale golden disc above the graceful leaves of the cocoanut palms. It rested its chin on the topmost branch, and the stems were as if cut in silver—and below the river murmured and the fire-flies danced. Joyce's eyes were very far away. She saw none of these things at all. "I remember he told me that Livingston—" She stopped; a man's white figure, with pith helmet, had turned down the bend of the road. Joyce thought it must be her husband, and she broke off her reverie and went to meet him. She thought her fancy was playing her a dreadful trick when, as they neared each other in the moonlight, she saw the face of her lover, Hugh Perceval.

But he advanced eagerly and yet calmly, and took her hand and gazed into her face with hungry eyes.

"Joyce! Oh, Joyce!"

She drew her hand from his, her heart beating fast with excitement and surprise.

"Is it *you*, Hugh? In *Java*!"

"Yes; that's rather odd, isn't it? Come back off the road, Joyce, and let me tell you the story briefly. I got the appointment of chemist and *chef de fabricatie* in the mill here through MacPhail—(our fathers were cousins)—when he was home. Science pays, after all, you see, occasionally!—and, do you know what I did, Joyce, after he promised me the post? I was in London, and I came down to Edinburgh to look for *you*. Then they told me you were married to a Dutchman and were going to *Java*. I think I cursed God and man! I did not ask his name; I took the train back, meaning to throw up the whole thing, but MacPhail had gone, and I called myself a fool. I was not needed till the *waal-tijd*, the milling season, and I made



up my mind to come. I arrived a week ago, and I heard yesterday also 'the baas,' as they call him, had married. Fate, Joyce, fate! was ever stranger fate?"

Something in his tone startled her vaguely, and the feverish glitter in his eyes was not natural. It was not pleasant.

"It was certainly very strange," she said quietly, "but the world is very small, you know. One cannot get away from people anywhere now-a-days, or hide one's self anywhere. The cablegram and P. and O. are the world's detectives; they are like Puck, they 'put a girdle round the world.'"

"Joyce," he cried passionately, "does that mean you wanted to get away from *me*?"

How like his voice was to the old one! She shivered for a moment. She felt as if this man were the ghost of the lover she had loved so dearly once—a ghost who took his face and voice, and wore his clothes, but was not *he*! For to her the old Hugh Perceval had died on the day she read that letter, and there was an intangible and subtle change in him now, which she felt, rather than saw. Her heart strings felt *tugged at*.

"No, I did not mean that."

"If you knew how I repented! how I cursed myself for what I did! But it all seemed so hopeless, and my father told me such an engagement was like a millstone round a man's neck. I had no sooner written to you and got back your ring than I could have torn my heart out! and I knew you, Joyce; I knew I could never come back to you! You would look at me as you look now—cold and strange. Oh, I saw it all!"

"Don't you think we had better let all this die for ever?" Joyce asked gravely, and she took a few steps onward. "It is all dead, you know; dead and buried! I am Herman's wife and you are the new *chef de fabricatie*."

"Yes," he said bitterly, "I will remember it! Do not be afraid! And as you say, it is dead and buried."

They walked up the road together then, and Joyce talked determinedly of other things—the voyage out, her visit to Singapore, the strange superstitions and beliefs in the strange and beautiful island in which they found themselves. And gradually Hugh seemed to recover himself, though his eyes never left her face.

And they parted at the gate of the MacPhails' bungalow.

"I shall come and pay my call, some evening, soon," Hugh said. "My respects to 'the baas's' wife. Good-bye, Joyce. I am glad to see you have kept your colour. The women here are all so yellow."

He tried to speak more lightly, and Joyce thought he was following her lead, and smiled on him almost in the old way.

"I suppose I shall grow yellow too," she said, "in time. Good-night."

And then he saw her enter the *pendoppo* (verandah), where the boy had just lit the big shaded lamp by her long cane chair. Then he saw the red end of a cigar, and Herman dashed up in his *bendy* (dog-cart), calling out to him pleasantly in English:

"It is you, Perceval? Will you not come in and see my wife?"

"Not to-night," the other answered, "thank you, MacPhail; another night."

And then he strode down the road, his dark eyebrows meeting fiercely. "His wife!" he thought, "*his wife!* Is she really happy? or is it all put on? She got ghastly white when she saw me first. And women are such actresses you never know. The man never lived yet who could read a woman. Is she happy or no?"

The question was still unanswered, he decided, after several weeks. And the time, monotonous in its unvarying blazing sunshine, went on. Perceval had been three months in Java.

## CHAPTER II.

### A CURIOUS CONVERSATION.

"COME in, come in, *mon ami*. Here is Van Emra. Joyce, here is Perceval. Sit down here, and what will you drink?"

"Here are *stroop* and *ayer blanda* (soda water) and your native wine, the good whisky. Come, say the word."

Perceval sat down and, putting out his hand, took a cigar slowly from the crystal and silver casket which Van Emra, the chief engineer of the mill, pushed towards him politely.

"I will have the mild wine of my country, thank you, with some *ayer blanda*."

MacPhail called to the boy, who brought the Apollinaris, after a preparatory fizzing bang, and soon Perceval was seated with the ice clinking gently in his glass, his eyes fixed on the

*portières*, which led from the cool pillared verandah into the *gallerei*, where the MacPhails dined. Joyce appeared after a little, a pretty cool figure, in a loosely-flowing tea-gown of white *crêpe*, belted at the waist with an Algerian silver buckle, and she was carrying a large bowl of tuberose, which she placed on the table before she gave Perceval her hand. The flowers scented the whole place. They saw a great deal of each other now. He was always dropping in to dinner, welcomed heartily by MacPhail, who feared his wife found the long evenings dull, and Hugh would sit by the piano, while Joyce sang to them both all the old songs Perceval knew and loved. MacPhail loved music too, and would beat time appreciatively, his good-natured face a little sleepy, and then by-and-by he would fall asleep, while Joyce played on softly, sometimes pausing to listen to Hugh's talk with that gentle half-pitying look. She was curiously sorry for him. She was much kinder to him now, Hugh told himself. He thought the old love was rising in her heart. If MacPhail were to die—if such contingency ever arose—he, Hugh, could win her again. But MacPhail showed no sign at all of dying.

"I have just got back from Samarang," Van Emra was saying. "I bought several Tauchnitz novels, if you would like them, Mr. MacPhail. And I got that Dutch story I told you of, 'Nommer Elf!' You know it, MacPhail? The poisoning one?"

"I do not care for it," MacPhail said lazily, dropping a piece of ice into his long glass. "I do not like tragedy—and such things are horrible."

"It was perfectly true, I have no doubt," Van Emra said. He had served his time on English ships, and spoke with wonderful fluency, as Dutchmen nearly all do. "That sort of thing is common in Java, quite common. A native girl will revenge herself like that as soon as look at you. And the cook—why, I knew a man last year whose cook poisoned him because he dismissed her husband, who was gardener! Do you know what she did? She chopped up the fibre of the bamboo and put little bits into his rice—a tiny piece in each grain—and she did that for weeks and weeks, and he spat blood, my friend, and died. Yes, he died in three months. It was very devilish."

"Good heavens!" Joyce cried in horror. "And was she never found out?"

"They could prove nothing. A native poisoner is never discovered. How can you? They know the poisons—they know every root and leaf and blade—we not, and if we suspect, and even examine, what use? The natives will lie like the devil. They will say, 'Yes, I saw,' one day and you fetch the *wedona* (native magistrate) and he calls witnesses, and the same boy comes, and he says, 'No, I saw nothing.' It is useless—quite useless. I could tell you such things you would not believe, if I told you."

Joyce, rocking in her chair by her husband's side, while he looked down at her every now and then in a curiously happy way, said:

"Do tell us, I should like to hear."

"One does not hear of such things in the towns—in Soerabaya, or Batavia, or Samarang—but here, in the interior; there are some devils here, and they work their will. If they wish to rob, say, what do they do? I knew a man, Van Halkema, a government employee, and he went up to the hills to hire land for planting, and he took with him much money. He and his friend they lived only in the *waroeng* (native restaurant) and got their food there. And the cook, she was in the plot, and they died—of cholera, it was said—and all the money was stolen. Every gulder. And another poison—and I could tell you what it is, for I had a boy who knew it and I asked him. It is the root of the —, well, I forget the Javanese word—but your boy could tell you, Perceval, for he was the one I had then."

Perceval started suddenly. Apparently he did not care for such talk, and he pushed back his chair into the shadow.

"They bake the seeds, and then, when they are quite dry, they set fire to them and blow the smoke, so—into the man's room. I know a story myself —"

"Excuse me one moment," Perceval said then, rising restlessly, "but I have just heard the 'tong-tong' strike eight and I have to meet Schel at the laboratory. Sorry to interrupt you, Van Emra."

He made his adieux very rapidly, and Herman having returned, Joyce looked again once at Van Emra.

"Do finish that story. I am like a child, I like to hear the end. What happened after the wretch blows in the smoke?"

But Perceval heard no more. He was driving back to the mill;

his eyes fixed before him. He saw nothing of the dark road with its sudden curious un-English scents. A piece of the conversation was going round in his head like a refrain—"Your boy could tell you, Perceval." Tell him—*what?*

Joyce had been giving the house-boy some directions about dinner, after their guest left, in her halting Malay, but she went up to her husband and they stood side by side on the steps now. It was moonlight, and the cocoa-nut palms looked as if bathed in silver, at the gate. She leant her cheek gently against his coat. "Are these things true, about the Hadjis' power, Herman?"

"I have heard them, on very good authority," he said gravely; "but from experience, I do not know. But it is true that they will poison so that one can never know. But do not fear, my wife; there are only a few who will do such things. And I will take care they do not come near my wife. What do you think of?"

"I was looking at the Southern Cross," she said. "It is beautiful! and they said I would be disappointed in it. I told Mary in my last letter what you said about her coming out, that she would see the cross for herself. How good you are, Herman!"

"It is you that are good," he said fondly. "I am making inquiry about ships, Joyce, and I think she had better come by 'British India.' And next mail you will send her the cheque."

She stood happily, talking of all they would do when her sister came, and the stars looked down upon them softly, and the frogs croaked and chirruped from the road. Then the "tong-tong" sounded nine and they went in to dinner.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A BAD DREAM.

IT was some weeks later, and the wet season had set in. The Kali was in flood, and Perceval's house, which was situated near the water-side, was rendered uninhabitable. Under which circumstances MacPhail said, in his easy way, that the *chef de fabricatie* must lodge with them till the house was put to rights. They had rooms to spare.

Hugh Perceval accepted, feeling as if fate were pushing him

down a dark road, whither he knew not. And yet he knew that he had yielded to something which had mastered him—love for the woman who was MacPhail's wife, hatred of the man who had torn her from him. These were the hands which pushed him down the descent to Avernus, and he made no effort to resist them.

He came to the administrator's on the Tuesday, and on Friday MacPhail fell ill with fever. Strong and hearty though he was, he succumbed utterly in alternate fits of shivering and fever, but he would not hear of Joyce sending for the doctor. He knew as well as Dr. Virsch what to do, he said. He would take a dose and sleep the fever off. When Hugh came in from the mill that night, Joyce said her husband was too ill to join them, and they dined alone in the *gallerei*. The monotonous sound of the rain beating on the level roof gave Joyce a headache, she said, and she looked pale and heavy-eyed. Her white dress, with its little knot of pale green velvet at the throat, became her admirably, and Hugh sat looking at her with a restless pain. He had won her once: if she were free—why not again? why not again? After dinner he said he would smoke a cigar in the garden under the orange trees, for the rain had lulled. The air was heavy with the scent of the orange flowers, and everything was very dark under the trees, except when a native, walking noiselessly past the gate, flashed his torch for a moment on the figure of the tall man leaning by it.

Joyce, sewing in the verandah, wondered why he stood there so long. She wondered, too, at his odd manner. He had taken something out of a pocket-book now and was looking at it fixedly—three or four beans or large seeds, of a pale yellow colour, baked and dry. His lips worked for a moment as he looked. Sooner or later we all die—and MacPhail had had his day! and after all she had been *his* sweetheart first. MacPhail had stolen his wife from him.

"Mr. Perceval, will you take some coffee?"

Her voice came to him suddenly and he thrust the book back in his pocket. He went in and drank his coffee, and then Joyce said she would retire. Her room was opposite her husband's, for she did not wish to disturb him by going in again. She put her hand into Perceval's, as she said good-night, and Hugh looked at it strangely. One day—would it rest there while he

said the words that made her his? A little courage and that would be! only a little courage!

The night fell and deepened over the bungalow. The servants all slept at the back, apart from the house; only the sick man, Joyce and the *chef de fabricatie* were within. One of them did not sleep.

He was up when one struck, with a wooden clang from the "tong-tong" down the road, and was echoed then from the next watchman's *wachthuis*. One o'clock! "*Why, then, 'tis time to do't.*"

"That play has haunted me all night," Perceval said to himself. "Only in it, a king's life trembled in the balance, and this is only—a common-place Dutchman's."

He smiled at his own thoughts and asked himself if he were going mad. On the dressing-table there lay a little saucer, and in the saucer five or six of the beans. He looked round cautiously, took a box of matches and glided across the *gallerie*. It was in darkness—darkness that could be felt. He groped till he reached a certain door, a narrow pencil of light fell through it, and he pushed one side, which was already slightly ajar, open. The administrator slept; he could hear his heavy breathing and see the handsome head thrown back on the pillows, by aid of the night-light which Joyce had placed beside a pitcher of iced water on the washstand. A pleasant, genial face! The face of the man who had been good to him, but whom he hated all the more for that, he thought; the face of the man who had stolen Joyce. Yes; he *hated* him!

"Hates any man the thing he would not kill?"

He struck a match cautiously and put the flame to the seeds. They glowed at once, and a thick white smoke, curiously penetrating and stifling, rose from the saucer. He crept into the room on tip-toe and laid it by the pitcher of water—it wreathed up and up, and Perceval felt suddenly as if his brain began to reel.

He was back at the door—leaning, watching.

Was it only fancy that a change was creeping over the sleeper? That the breath came stertorously, that a white waxy pallor crept over the face?

"There was a manhood in his look,  
That murder could not kill!"



Murder! Murder! Heavens! What a horrible word, and how it shouted itself through the stillness of the house. Had he spoken it aloud?

Another look; yes, the face under the little aureole of light showed ghastly; he could no longer hear the loud breathing; he must take away the evidence of his guilt. The deed—was *done*! How quickly! How irreverently! He stole in and lifted the saucer, his handkerchief to his mouth. A rat tore across the bamboo roof, and his nerves were so unstrung that he could have shrieked aloud. He was at the door—it stood open. What—who was that *watching him*?

Joyce! Pale as her dressing-gown, her grey eyes fixed in a stare of horror on his face, one red spot flushing like a crimson stain on either cheek. She beckoned to him noiselessly. She had taken the saucer from his hand. Like a man in a dream he saw her throw the smouldering contents on the matting and stamp them out. Then she turned and faced him. They two alone in the wide verandah, where her taper made a little glimmering circle of light. And he waited for her to speak.

"I saw you—and—I *understo.d*!"

He seemed to find speech then, and laughed suddenly and sardonically, a laugh that did not seem his at all.

"I own it, Joyce. I have risked my soul's damnation to win you. Men have damned themselves for love ever since the world began. Why do you look at me like that? There is still time. Drag him out of the atmosphere—unless—unless it is too late!"

"You did not hear the end of Mr. Van Emra's story," she said slowly and with a dreadful scorn. "The smoke of these seeds only stupefies, and renders those who inhale it unconscious. You meant *murder*! But God was kind, and saved the man I love!"

"The man you love?"

"Yes." And then she pointed. "Now—go."

He looked out into the darkness, then back at her face. The eyes did not falter; her lips did not quiver. "Go!" she repeated; "go!"

And he went, without a word or a backward look. They were never to meet again in this world.

• • • • •

"I am really better, Joyce," the administrator said next

morning, "though in all my life I have never slept more heavily! I have lain like wood till now. And what is this curious smell? It clings to the curtain!"

"Smell this," Joyce said, "and then come to breakfast; and here is a note for you."

"It is from Perceval—and good gracious! Joyce! He has gone! Been summoned home. You will miss him, my dear?"

"No, I will not miss him," Joyce said.

"Have you a headache, my wife?"

"I have had a bad dream," she answered smilingly; and then she put up the spray of waxy orange blossoms to her lips. "But it is over. Come, Herman; make haste. All is well now you are better." And the administrator and his wife were soon smiling at each other over the coffee cups. It was so good to be well again, he said. And a new *chef de fabricatie* was got for the mill.

## Love or Justice!

By CHRISTIE DUTTON.

### CHAPTER I.

"AH, Léon! this is a sweet spot."

"And a perfect seat for two, is it not, Marguerite?"

The young peasants were resting on an old ivy-covered tree trunk that lay on a rising knoll above the French village of Sallanche.

A tall chestnut sheltered them from the sun behind; in front, a grassy meadow sloped gently to a hollow, where a narrow stream bubbled over stones and gravel, its clear water eddying in noisy ripples between larger boulders, with a joyous, happy cadence.

Beyond the stream the meadow sloped again, till it terminated in a small plain, on which the picturesque village was situated.

On this hillock, half-an-hour ago, Marguerite Gsell had met Léon Perier, the young mountain guide, and had promised, with her whole warm, impulsive heart, to be his bride.

Her dark oval face, with its rich colouring, had a radiant smile on it, but her brown eyes were bent shyly on the ground, as she held the rough hand of the handsome lad beside her, and continued in her pretty *patois*:

"Yes, Léon, I have loved you long; they tried to prejudice me against you; they told me you were wild, unsteady—but I did not believe them."

"You did right, Marguerite; their words were false." The young man hesitated, then he added, "There may have been some truth in them once. I have been foolish, but now, now you are mine, you will help me. You are good, religious, Father Ledoux calls you 'the saint of his flock.'"

"Hush! Léon, hush! you flatter me," the girl replied quickly. "You were only wild; now, for both our sakes, you will be a noble, honest man——"

"For yours, Marguerite——." Suddenly, a shadow lengthened

by the afternoon sun, fell across their feet, and caused them to look up. Some one was walking along the path close beside them. It was another guide; he passed with a silent greeting, yet, as he went, he cast a sad, reproachful glance at Marguerite. The colour mounted to the girl's cheeks. Léon scarcely waited till the man had gone, to utter an angry, bitter exclamation that startled her.

"I hate that fellow Hautier! I used to think you cared for him."

Marguerite smiled.

"He is a good man, but I never loved him. My relations wanted me to marry him, and he pressed me often, but then—well—I was obstinate," she tossed her little head, "I liked you best."

"Ah! Marguerite—," her speech was interrupted. For another hour the lovers talked on, then they went home together to tell their news.

\* \* \* \* \*

A month later, Sallanche was astir to celebrate the marriage of Marguerite Gsell, and Léon Perier. It was a pretty wedding. Marguerite made a beautiful bride; some shook their heads and said she was too good for Léon, and many looked with compassion on the only grave guest at the *fête*, the quiet young guide of Chamonix—"le bon" Jean Hautier.

## CHAPTER II.

"AH, you women! you think men can be as meek as you. I am justly furious. I have been cheated, duped, and slandered!"

Léon Perier strode angrily up and down his chalet; his wife watched him with a remonstrating, anxious expression.

"Did I not tell you yesterday, I was to guide a German to the Grands Mulets for twenty francs? This morning at Couttet's Hotel I met an Englishman, who said he had decided to ascend Mont Blanc with old Déchette, and might require a second guide. I knew what that meant, a hundred francs, so I declined the German's offer, and walked back to arrange with the Englishman. The villain told me he had just engaged a guide—Hautier; he had heard a better character of him. I was wild, unsteady—bah! I know not what he said, and that cur Hautier——"

"Hush, Léon! Hautier is a good man, and bears you no ill-will."

"He loves *you*, Marguerite. I hate the fellow! I told the Englishman he owed me twenty francs."

"Léon! he had not engaged you! Did he pay it?"

"No; nor yet half. Ah! those English! He owed me twenty francs, I say. I grew angry, and spoke hotly to him, then he gave me a single franc, and told me I had better say no more about it! A franc! a mean *pourboire*!"

"I am sorry he gave you *that*, Léon," Marguerite answered sadly; "you have had too much wine already."

"Already! a single bottle! What is that to me? I tell you what, Marguerite, you shall not——"

Marguerite came up to him, and laying a hand upon his arm, looked up into his face.

"Léon," she said gently, "you promised me that day upon the hill——"

A change came over the rough peasant, his angry, flushed face relaxed, his restless eyes looked into hers, and grew softer in expression. Stooping down, he kissed her.

"My little saint!" he muttered, "I'm really sorry; still, I have lost a big day's wage."

"It is vexing, Léon; but see, is there nothing else you can do?"

He thought a moment; the angry, ill-tempered, scarcely sober man, had changed miraculously.

"Yes," he said at last, "I will walk up to the Montanvert Hotel; there may be some mules to bring down."

Marguerite saw him to the door, and stood there waving her hand, as he went down the mountain path to Chamonix. She had smiled brightly, but now the smile disappeared; a touch of sadness crept into the corners of her mouth, her face grew anxious and drawn. The bonnie peasant girl, who had married twelve months ago, had grown thinner and older-looking, yet she was as beautiful now, as then, perhaps more so, for now it was a sweetened, softened beauty.

Had you asked her if her marriage had been a failure, she would have started, and indignantly denied it. Léon was just as dear to her now, yes, doubly dear; was it not just because she loved him so tenderly, that of late she had been so anxious and uneasy about him?

"Was it," she asked herself, as she watched his retreating figure, "was it because his love for her was getting dulled and deadened, because his vows to her had merely been a passing enthusiasm, that recently his conduct had degenerated, and his old wildness reappeared? Had it been wise of them to come to Chamonix, as Jean Hautier seemed still to be regarded with such unreasonable jealousy? Had it been a false, conceited idea of hers that she could keep young Perier steady? Had she made a mistake in her bridegroom? A thousand times no!" She shuddered as she went inside, and closed the door. "Better Léon and his wildness than any saint she did not love!"

\* \* \* \*

In the café attached to the Montanvert Hotel, some guides were resting.

It was a close afternoon, they were thirsty, two or three bottles of wine had already been emptied among them.

"Hautier," exclaimed one, "where is your *pourboire*?"

"I have none," Hautier replied moodily; "our English traveller is careful of his money, he gave but fifty centimes to Déchette for both of us. Déchette must treat you; I need no more, it is too hot to drink."

"Bah! the reason that we need it! Fifty centimes! Déchette where is this *douceur*?"

Old Déchette gave a knowing wink; his cunning, unprepossessing face relaxed into a grin.

"Fifty centimes! Do you think, then, it was to divide? Hautier was talking to young Rislard; I drank it to myself. Hautier must ask for more."

"Right!" cried the rest. "Where is this fine Englishman?"

"Photographing on yonder rock," replied Hautier. "Leave him; we do not need the miser's money."

"*Ma foi*, Hautier! not need it?" old Déchette cried. "These brave fellows must be treated, and mind you, we have yet five hours' work before us."

"*C'est vrai*," Hautier muttered; "the Grands Mulets must be reached to-night. Bah! why should he give me nought, and you so little? I will go and ask him. See, comrades, I will get something from him."

Hautier crossed the room, and slammed the door behind him.

"Hautier is angry for once, and he does well," laughed Gaspard the barman.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

The young Duke du Barbène and his tutor were climbing up the mountain path, and nearing the summit of Montanvert.

The road that wound in snake-like curves, through firs and brushwood, was hidden from sight above and below.

Suddenly, angry excited voices fell upon their ears; two men were apparently quarrelling at some height above them. They paused to listen; the voices grew louder and more angry; they could even distinguish words—"Pourboire"—"Rien"—"*Je ne veux pas*"—"Hautier! Hautier!"—then a piercing shriek startled them, as it startled the peasants and guides drinking in the restaurant Hautier had quitted five minutes since.

The curiosity of the tourists was aroused, they hastened up the path, which grew steeper as it neared the top. As they approached the hotel, they saw people hurrying out and running upwards.

They followed them, and reached a narrow plateau on a high piece of rock that overhung the Mer de Glace. The group of men had stopped, and clustered there, gesticulating eagerly, talking in loud excited voices, and pointing downwards over the ledge of rock. Two of them were running back towards the rough path that led down to the glacier.

Short grass grew on the little plateau, here and there it was torn in great tumps, small stones were kicked out of their beds. There had evidently been a terrific struggle, a photographic camera lay broken on the ground, two alpenstocks were near it.

"What is it?" asked the duke.

"*Voilà*," the men pointed over the edge, "the guide has pushed the traveller over and killed him!"

The gentlemen looked. The body of a man lay in a shapeless mass upon the ice below; a guide bent over him, he held a leather purse in one hand, with the other he was wiping the blood from off the dead man's face. The peasant's countenance was ashy pale.

"Comrades," he shouted up, "I had no hand in this. I found him here. The purse was on the rock above. I hurried down to see what I could do, but the Englishman is dead."



The tutor took out a note-book and made some entries.

"His name?" he asked.

"Jean Hautier." He smiled significantly. Some one added kindly, "It was unintentional; he is a good man, but he was in a rage and wanted money; the least push would do it."

"Had he had any wine?" the tutor questioned further.

"A little," they replied.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night Chamonix was ringing with the news.

Déchette brought the tidings to Marguerite as she poured out Léon's coffee.

The girl stood for a moment staring with startled, frightened eyes into the old man's face, then she turned, her glance fell upon her husband; she gave a piercing scream and fell senseless on the floor.

### CHAPTER III.

IT was sunrise.

The Mer de Glace was bathed in a dull ruddy light, that transformed it into a frozen sea of blood. The glow fell in a lesser degree upon the summit of Montanvert, the small grassy height rising above the wealth of misty firwood that clothed almost the entire mountain.

On a rocky ledge, the scene of yesterday's disaster, the dim light disclosed a woman, groping on her knees upon the short coarse grass.

The rough stones were wet with dew; she turned them over one by one with careful scrutiny, and groped and felt amongst the slippery, moist herbage, with a fierce determination in her face.

At last an exclamation escaped her; she had found something to reward her search.

After a minute examination she placed it in her handkerchief, and concealed that in her bosom.

Then the woman raised her cramped limbs from the ground, and began her weary journey homewards.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was six o'clock when Marguerite re-entered her bedroom.

Léon was sleeping still. She crept cautiously across the room and took up his fustian waistcoat. One of the buttons down the front was missing. She drew out of her handkerchief a small circle of brass, with a spot of recent rust upon it. It matched the other buttons exactly.

Marguerite gave a sudden cry, and let the waistcoat fall. A silver coin rolled out of the pocket and spun noisily on the wooden floor.

It was an English shilling.

The noise awakened Léon ; he sat up.

"Marguerite, what are you doing ? Come to bed. How ill you look. What is it ?

"I am only cold, Léon ; I am coming." She kissed her husband passionately as she got into bed.

Léon was surprised.

"You are a good wife," he said ; "do you love me very much, Marguerite ?"

"More than my life, Léon."

"I have a secret—whatever happens—I shall never tell the world. If I told you, I wonder could you love me still ?"

"I will not hear your secret," she shuddered ; "I am sleepy. Know this, Marguerite will love you always."

#### CHAPTER IV.

TICK, tick, tick ; it was the only sound to be heard in the Periers' bedroom.

Marguerite lay by the side of her sleeping husband, her hot dry hands clasped over her forehead, her large eyes staring vacantly into the darkness. Two months she had kept her terrible secret. She had blinded her eyes, and dulled her senses against an inference that chased her with a hideous pertinacity, against a leaden burden that took the very strength out of her life.

Yet what had she to go upon ?

A button! her husband probably lost on his journey for the mules.

A shilling ! he might easily have received from any English tourist.

Yesterday Hautier's trial had taken place at Annecy.

All day long she had endured the tortures of purgatory. She

had sat up till twelve o'clock for the evening paper a neighbour had promised her; it had not come. To-night she had dreamt a horrible dream. Yet every one said Hautier would not lose his life. He had been heard to threaten the tourist, but his crime was unpremeditated, unintentional. Penal servitude would be the sentence—penal servitude! Suppose it had been Léon.

Marguerite unconsciously touched her husband; he turned and muttered something in his sleep. What was it that made her catch her breath, and listen spellbound?

"You will not pay me? Bah! then I will take it. Ah, how you fight. Hautier is in the hotel; you need not call, he is deaf. Stay! I have it. Let me go, villain—there—" Léon sprang into a sitting position, his voice was still thick, he was unconscious all the time—"there! I have killed the man. I am a murderer," his voice rose, then fell again; "let me hide, nobody shall know."

Marguerite caught his sleeve and pulled him down. Léon half awoke.

"Eh! What, Marguerite? Where is the coverlet?" he pulled the clothes over him and was asleep again.

Then Marguerite got up, lit a candle, and crept downstairs. She was only in her night-dress; she shivered with cold, yet her head was in a burning fever, her brain felt as if it was bursting. She must think, she must be cool.

She started as she entered the kitchen; a cap was on the table, it was her husband's; she had seen it fifty times before, but now, somehow, it seemed different; it was a criminal's cap—it was a murderer's.

A paper lay on the floor by the door, she caught it up eagerly. It was the evening news her neighbour had slipped inside.

The thin leaves rustled and tore beneath her shaking fingers; she could not find the place; a suffocating, giddy feeling overcame her. She knelt down beside the table, where the tallow candle guttered in the draught, and there, by the faint light, found the article.

One glance sufficed; her head fell heavily on her outstretched arms upon the table; she gave a low, bitter moan.

An hour or more Marguerite knelt there, stunned by the blow she had received.

The candle swealed and spluttered; finally it went out. The

paper lay on the floor, its thrilling article, with the large-lettered heading, uppermost :

THE MONTANVERT MYSTERY.

COMPLETION OF THE TRIAL.

HAUTIER CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

At length, when the dawn was stealing dimly in between the wooden shutters, Marguerite raised her head and shuddered.

"A fortnight more, Hautier will die. I must bestir myself," she got up painfully—her limbs were cramped—and slowly began pacing the room.

"Think, think," she groaned. "I shall go mad if I am not quick. One of the two must suffer, which shall it be? Hautier must be saved, he is innocent, yet—if Jean be saved, Léon must die.

"Léon is guilty, but he is mine. Léon is wild, unsteady, but—Oh! oh, Léon, how I love you." She gave a hysterical sob, and moistened her burning forehead with some cold water that stood in a basin on the dresser.

"Shall the innocent or the guilty escape?" again she continued her restless walking. "The innocent—ah! but shall the husband be betrayed by the wife, though he be—" still another turn, swifter and swifter. Oh, to get away from that word; it dogged her steps and stupefied her senses.

"If we were but Swiss peasants, ten miles away in Switzerland. They have no capital punishment, but we—ah, no—*la France—la guillotine.*"

"Jean, Jean," she wrung her hands despairingly and spoke aloud, "I cannot, cannot save you. You loved me dearly; once you said you would die for me. Now, Jean, I will accept your noble sacrifice.

"The second place in my heart shall be yours, sacred to your memory; dearest after him, who shall live through—" she started, and glanced round nervously.

"What am I saying? What is that; that white thing yonder in the gloomy light? Ah, the crucifix."

She walked to the wall, where the roughly-carved stone figure hung on the ebony cross, and fell on her knees before it.

"Holy Jesus, hear me, help! Should I not keep my marriage

vow? Should I not be true to Léon? Show me I am right; I love him."

Tears were rolling down her cheeks, she raised her eyes to the figure.

The reclining head was bent towards her; those earnest, down-cast eyes seemed to penetrate her very soul and conscience. The motionless face was sad and grave.

Slowly, as Marguerite looked, that expressive glance sent a chilling terror through her; she hid her face in her hands and, like a guilty criminal, shook with fear.

She was pleading injustice from the God of Justice. She had never read a Bible, but now, like a flash of lightning, she remembered part of a text Father Ledoux had quoted in a sermon against the Anarchists: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood—" "Ah, was not that like Léon? What did it say? What was to be the punishment?" she pressed her forehead, pushing back the black waving hair. "Oh, if she could remember. How did it finish?"

She leant her throbbing temples against the cool wall, and gradually memory came to her, and whispered the end of the sentence: "by man shall his blood be shed."

She bowed her head silently, her heart seemed to stand still. This was Heaven's decree. Her duty was outlined for her; she clasped her hands in agony. Had she strength to do it?

At length, slowly, irrevocably, her vow was uttered:

"It shall be done—though it be to risk my husband's life; justice shall be satisfied, oh God!"

Once more she looked upon the Crucified.

The first ray of sunshine entering the room lit up the face with a marvellous light; it seemed to Marguerite the Christ was smiling on her.

## CHAPTER V.

EARLY in the morning, Marguerite posted a letter to the Procureur.

For her words to have weight in justifying the innocent, she had confessed, without mentioning her husband's name, she knew the guilty one.

Then she hurried home to warn Léon.

The gendarmes would be with her next morning; he must be

far away by then. He must fly disguised to Paris, from thence must come tidings of his suicide, drowned in the Seine, or some such death ; a letter must be left for her, confessing his guilt, for Hautier's sake.

In reality, he would flee to England, and by-and-bye, when the search for him was over, and his crime forgotten, she could join him ; they could once more live together happily—happily as a murderer and his wife could live ! happily—if he would have his betrayer with him !

Marguerite had fulfilled her vow bravely, but when she reached the chalet she was unnerved and trembling. It would be worse than all, this interview with Léon ! Her treachery must be revealed ; she must win instead of love, loathing, distrust hatred !

She entered, her heart sinking within her—the home was deserted.

Léon had fled ; a slip of paper lay on the table.

"DEAREST WIFE," it ran—

"I want a change ; I go as waiter to the hotel at St. Gervais—for a month. Take care of yourself.

"LEON."

"He has seen the paper," she cried. "I must hurry after him. The gendarmes will pass to-morrow through St. Gervais !"

\* \* \* \*

It was nearly midnight when Marguerite reached St. Gervais, and began to climb the steep drive to the hotel. She was foot-sore and weary with her long walk, the struggle of the last twenty-four hours had exhausted her terribly.

She sat down to rest and gather strength for the coming interview.

Suddenly the stillness of the evening was broken, a loud report, like the firing of a cannon, startled her ; it came from the mountains that rose behind the hotel.

She listened again ; there was a dull continuous rumble ; it was unlike thunder ; gradually it grew louder and louder ; it became a rushing turbulent roar, that made her spring up, and sent a nervous shuddering through her.

The noise increased till it grew deafening ; it was the roaring of a descending torrent, a glacier, or an avalanche !



It was approaching rapidly ; it was descending upon the hotel where her husband lay, upon herself, climbing to his rescue !

Even now the crash of falling rocks and trees thundered in the air. A few shrill screams sounded close above, drowned in a louder crash, a louder roar—the hotel was being swept away !\*

The ground shook beneath Marguerite, she rushed madly towards the entrance gate, it was too late ! The noise of the approaching flood increased ; she tripped and fell ; in another moment a vast volume of water bore her away on its surging, heaving surface.

\* \* \* \* \*

One huge sea of mud and rocks, ruins and wreckage, marks the spot where the magnificent French hotel at St. Gervais stood.

Groups of men are digging out the bodies of the victims, buried last evening in the falling glacier.

Mourners crowd around, their sobs and wails going up to heaven, they wait expectantly, hour after hour, dreading, yet hoping, to behold their dead.

Apart from the rest a haggard woman kneels. Her clothing is torn and soaked with mud and slime. She has no cover on her head, her black hair, heavily streaked with grey, is flying in dishevelled locks over her face and round her shoulders ; tears are rolling down deep furrows in her cheeks.

By her side lies a mutilated form in the black dress of a waiter, the disfigured face is resting on her knees, the glazed eyes are still open, a terrified, startled expression in them.

She has found her dead to mourn over !

But the wife is not looking at her husband, her eyes are fixed on the road to Chamonix, and, as two mounted gendarmes speed along, a strange thanksgiving rises to her lips—"Thank God ! My husband is dead."

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\* July, 1892. Destruction viewed by author a week later.

## Sonnie Baba.

By MRS. ALEX. ELLIOT.

THE short Indian twilight was descending on the gardens and clubhouse of Bindipore. The band of the 110th regiment was playing a soft but inspiring little waltz tune. No one seemed to be listening, unless it were the colonel of the 110th, who had paused in his quarter-deck pacing of the grass, and was looking over the head of the bandmaster at an approaching group, an old Madrassi ayah, a syce carrying a large white umbrella, which he was just closing, having discovered that the sun had set, and there was no need any longer to shelter Sonnie Baba's yellow pate from its rays, and Sonnie Baba himself, who was walking by the ayah's side kicking up in clouds the dust with his little brown boots. The colonel of the 110th saw with unseeing eyes the little group on the white bend of the road—he was planning some manœuvres for to-morrow's field-day as he beat time to the strains of his regimental band. The last set of tennis were intent on their game. The few couples who still strolled about, heedless of the heavy dew and the damp mist that was rising about them, had forgotten the music.

"The grass *is* rather damp, though," remarked Mrs. Courtland, as she noticed the dewdrops shining on her dainty patent leather shoe, and she turned towards the verandah.

"You won't forget, then, will you, Mrs. Courtland, second and third extras," said Mr. Buxton, the young fellow who had walked beside her on the dew-wet grass. The tone was quite eager and beseeching, and the handsome young face was very much in earnest. "Buxton is so keen; I never knew any one so keen," is what the other young subalterns in the 22nd Dragoons said of him. Half-an-hour before he had been keen enough over polo, riding like the wind on his white Arab pony, "La Guerre," hatless, his fair hair blown back, his long figure bending over the ball. Mrs. Courtland had watched him critically; now she answered him with the same cool, critical smile on her face—Aylmer Buxton was one of her admirers—"Such a pretty boy,"

she called him—she liked to keep them all at an even distance, according no more favour or friendship to one than to another.

"Do I ever forget, Mr. Buxton? But I don't promise to wait if you don't turn up for your dances."

"Oh, I say, Mrs. Courtland, it's hard lines to remind me of how I failed the other night. You know I couldn't help it. Mata Din is such an awfully good syce, and he'd got a real nasty kick from my charger; I had to go and see after him." Mrs. Courtland did not reply.

"Hullo, I say, who's this? Why, it's Sonnie," as a little figure in a blue and white sailor suit came running along the verandah shouting, "Oh, Mr. Buxton, where's my mummy?"

"Here she is, little chappie, not far off," and he hoisted the little lad on to his shoulder and swung him round to show him his mother, who was now reclining in a long cane chair. A knot of subalterns had gathered round; they were all in polo kit, with long boots and spurs and covert coats buttoned up over jerseys and great scarves.

"What brings you here, young man," said several.

"Oh, me wanted me mummy, and so me comed."

Mrs. Courtland kissed the little fellow lightly as Mr. Buxton held the child towards her.

"Go home, Sonnie," she said, "it's much too late for little boys; what would father say!"

"He must have a ride first," and up and down the verandah strode Aylmer Buxton with Sonnie on his shoulder. The old ayah, waiting in a dark corner of the verandah, felt the mist as it stole in under the tiled roof, and she shivered, and taking Sonnie from the young subaltern, she tried to wrap her chuddah round him as a protection from the evening air. How often had she told the Mem Sahib that Sonnie Baba should have "one leetle coat," and often had the Mem Sahib forgotten to get him that "one leetle coat." Mrs. Courtland watched the old ayah retreat with her burden, Sonnie waved his hand, and his mother kissed her finger-tips to him. What a dear little boy he was, and how pretty! but he would be much more interesting when he was a little older.

When the ayah and Sonnie reached home, the bearer was pottering about lighting the lamps and getting out the sahib's full-dress uniform, for there was to be a fancy ball in Bindipore

that night. Sonnie was always interested in *dadda's* uniform, and especially his sword and his *burra burra* (big big) boots, and to-night ayah took him in to see his "pritty mamma's pritty frock," as she called it in her broken English, that Sonnie repeated after her. He talked a strange language, this little neglected Anglo-Indian child. Father was a soldier, the garrison was a large one: what with field-days and regimental work what time had he to teach grammar or the art of language to his little son? while, for his mother, was she not equally hard worked? dinners, balls, tennis, riding parties, her husband's position to maintain, his regiment to entertain; what time had she for that little golden-haired boy who called her "mother," and the centre of whose small world was my "pritty mamma?" When the ayah brought Sonnie his supper of bread and milk, and seating herself beside him cross-legged on the floor, prepared as usual to ladle the mixture into his rosy mouth, while she sang to him some quaint old native song, she was troubled to find her little charge flushed and hot. His little hands were burning, and he pushed the proffered spoon away crossly, saying, "Nahin, nahin, le-jao." (No, no, take it away.)

"Humara (my) darlin' Baba sick," cried the old woman, and she called to the bearer that "Bokhar agaya" (fever come), and put the unresisting child to bed. In a little while Sonnie lay quiet, the cool cotton pillowcases soothed his heated cheeks, but soon he began to turn and toss and breathe in quick fever breaths.

"Kirki koldo (open the window), ayah," he cried.

Just then Mrs. Courtland ran hurriedly along the passage to dress. She had come back late; there was only a quarter of an hour to put on the Marie Antoinette costume, for Colonel West and Mr. Graham were coming to dine to go to the ball with them.

The ayah did not respond to Sonnie's querulous cry to open the window; she feared the damp night air. Instead, she lowered the lamp, and squatting by his bed, her rugged black features outlined against the white coverlet, she sang, "Nindi, nindi, karo" (go to sleep), and patted ceaselessly the small burning hand that held the cot rail in the endeavour to extract coolness out of the cold iron.

Presently Sonnie heard the soft frou-frou of his mother's dress as she passed his door.

"Mummy, me wants to kiss me pritty mamma," but the sound went by. Presently there came the clank of father's spurs, and they stopped at the door and Colonel Courtland looked in, whispering lest he should wake the child. "Baba sogaya?" (baby asleep?) he said inquiringly.

"Nahin," said the old ayah, "Bokhar agaya."

"Good-night, dada; kiss me."

Colonel Courtland stood over the child in all his bravery of red and gold lace, a strange unaccountable pang at his heart. Sonnie often had fever; he would probably be well by to-morrow. Still he never liked to see his little boy suffer, and was always fidgety until he was well again. He laid his cool hand with his signet ring that his wife Ella had given him, gently on the child's forehead.

"Never mind, Sonnie; better to-morrow, my boy. Try and go to sleep."

"Ralph," his wife's voice called impatiently.

"Baba Khabbardar karo, ayah" (take care of baby), he said, and clanked out of the room.

The two guests had arrived, but he interrupted the talk of polo ponies and races to say:

"Ella, Sonnie is very poorly with fever; have you seen him?"

"No, dear," she said sweetly, "he'll be all right to-morrow. Dinner has been announced. I really must not stop now to go and see him; besides, I should disturb him; ayah will look after him."

The dinner-table was very bright. The glass and silver sparkled among an ethereal arrangement of white flowers and green ferns. Mrs. Courtland's little dinners were always of the most *recherché*, and she herself a hostess altogether to be desired.

Sonnie tossed and turned. "Pani, Pani!" (water, water), he cried. The fever rose higher. The blue mist stole up from the river, under the child's windows.

The carriage had driven away from Colonel Courtland's door, and soon Mrs. Courtland was waltzing round in ever keener enjoyment of the gay scene.

Colonel Courtland stood moodily against a wall.

The old ayah dozed at her post. "Kola kirki kola" again moaned Sonnie. He would not be appeased. The old woman roused herself and tottered sleepily to the window. Should she

not do as her Baba asked her, her little darling Sonnie Baba? She opened the French window on to the verandah—only a little. The cold, cruel mist stole in through the chick that veiled the window, and hovered unseen near Sonnie's cot—the dank, cold mist, fever-laden from the river bed.

"Nindi, Baba, nindi" (sleep, baby, sleep), sang ayah, as she reseated herself; "Roti mukkun chini" (bread and butter sugar), and on through the quaint little song.

Silence again. Only the sharp fever breaths, the distant howl of the jackals, and the cry of the chowkidar (watchman) as he went his rounds, a strange figure in the moonlight, wrapped in the folds of his blanket and carrying a long stick.

"Ayah, ayah, mamma, me wants me pritty mamma; bulao, ayah, bulao" (call her, ayah, call her).

Sonnie's dog moans piteously at the round-faced moon. The night wind blows the trails of bugainvillea in weird taps against the trellis work of the verandah. So the hours go heavily, wearily by, for the little fever-racked boy.

It is two o'clock. The returning carriage draws up with a crunch on the gravel walk under the stone porch. Mrs. Courtland jumps out, a little weary after so much pleasure, so many small triumphs. As she passes her room her ear is attracted by a sound of talking. It is Sonnie's shrill baby voice. Softly she opens the door and looks in. "Mamma, mummy, come kiss me; me good, ayah says me good."

Mrs. Courtland advanced to the bed, crying, "Here I am, dear."

No reply. No throwing of the little arms around her neck; only a wild look in the great blue eyes. Sonnie did not know her. Mrs. Courtland was frightened now, she bid the ayah run for the sahib. Colonel Courtland was by her side in another moment, and lifting the little child in his arms he tried to soothe him; but still he called for his mother, and still he did not know her.

"Is there a window open, Ella, it seems quite cold here?" Mrs. Courtland noticing the open window for the first time, closed it.

Her husband put the child into her arms, and saying he should send for the doctor, left the room.

Mrs. Courtland sat in a low chair, in her queenly dress,



nursing the poor little boy. The ayah had wrapped him in his blue dressing-gown. His great eyes fixed on his mother so unconsciously frightened her, his little hands plucked all unknowing at the pearls round her neck.

She loosened the necklace and gave it into his hands, but it dropped to the floor, and she did not heed it. Was there not something more precious still dropping away from her?

The doctor came. He was a casual, superficial young man. At polo and dancing he was more of an acquisition than in the sick room. He prescribed a fever mixture, and prophesied the child would soon be better.

But he was a false prophet. The days passed on, and little Sonnie did not come back to consciousness or life—the bright baby life that had been his. His mother hung over his bed, she never left him; her pretty eyes were red with weeping. Sonnie did not ask any more for Mummy's kiss; it was she who begged her baby to speak to her. In vain! The cruel mist had done its work. Sonnie was taken back to the great All-Father who had lent him for a time. The poor old ayah wept bitter tears for "Humara (my) Sonnie Baba." The bearer went softly for many days. Colonel Courtland bowed his head silently, and it was noticed "how grey the colonel gets," while for Sonnie Baba's mother, life lay before her bitter, with a vain regret.

## A Talisman of the East.

### CHAPTER I.

#### MISS MAUDIE'S LEGACY.

THE old colonel was in a good humour.

Who could fail to be in a good humour on a sweet summer afternoon, when the birds were singing in the trees, and the sun was wrapping everything in a mantle of gold, and all nature wore the gentle smile of happiness?

The bungalow which the old Indian colonel had built for himself, and christened "Delhi Cottage," was in a lovely little spot in South Devon. It was a quaint and modest home suggestive of the East, with a broad verandah running all round it, on to which the rooms opened. Surrounding it was a mossy lawn brightened with flowers and fringed with a luxuriant wealth of forest trees. Here the Indian veteran was gently passing away the few remaining years that were spared to him by nature and the bullets of many battles.

Colonel Stapleton had just left the verandah and seated himself in his quiet study, his sacredly private room, where he wrote his letters, and read his Indian papers, and smoked his hookah, and where very few were ever privileged to disturb him.

Rat-tat at the door.

"Come in," said the colonel in his gentle voice.

Rat-tat-tat!

"Come in," cried the colonel in his military voice.

Rat-tat-tat-tat!

"Why on earth don't you come in?" in a distinctly Anglo-Indian voice.

Then the door burst open, and in ran little Maudie with a shout and a laugh, and she flew to her grandpapa with outstretched arms.

"I took you in, grandpa; I took you in! Didn't you think it was the postman, or Miss Mary, or old Sir John? Tell me who you thought it was?"

Maudie was eight; grandpapa was seventy. The consequence was that as grandpapa was in a good humour, Maudie was immediately seated on his knee.

"You little mischief," said the old colonel, "why do you come at this identical moment? Don't you see I am writing a very important letter? Run away to Miss Mary for half-an-hour," and he stroked her hair and gave her a kiss.

"Miss Mary told me to run about and play in the garden," said Maudie.

Miss Mary Graham, be it understood, was Maudie's governess, who loved the little orphan girl as if she were her own, and often thought to herself what a wicked thing war must be, when it blows out of life a whole generation, and leaves the one before and the one after with a wide gap of sad memories between them.

"Miss Mary told me to play, grandpa, but I saw you through the window with your great big desk open, and I said to myself, 'I'll be the postman,' and see what you do when you open your big desk."

The desk which had aroused so much curiosity in Maudie's juvenile breast was an ordinary large writing-bureau, which, when unlocked, presented a number of drawers and shelves for letters, and the usual conveniences for papers and correspondence. But Maudie had never seen her grandpapa's bureau open before. Whenever she had been in the colonel's study it had always been closed and locked, and the gentle little instinct of feminine curiosity was pushing its head up and quietly asserting itself. She had longed to see that big bureau open. Little did she dream how her own destiny was linked with its contents.

"Grandpa, what are all these drawers for?" said little Maudie.

"This is for paper," said the colonel, "and this is for envelopes, and this is for sealing wax and stamps," and he opened one after the other.

"And what is this one for?" said Maudie, laying her chubby little hand on the lowest drawer on the right hand side.

The old colonel paused a moment and turned his great blue eyes, that shone like diamonds under the shaggy overbush of his thick eyebrows, on to the little girl on his knee.

"Strange things, Maudie, many very strange things."

Why is it that at the most unlikely times a wave of feeling sweeps over us and carries us back into the almost forgotten past? How is it that a chance word will sometimes conjure back into vivid life, as if by necromancy, that which can be no more? Why was it that the old colonel, as he stroked little Maudie's

hair, and said, "Strange things, many very strange things," forgot all about the present and stood again in thought on a battle-field in the far-off East, with a vision of death around him, and the white face of Maudie's father looking at him with dead open eyes? Oh memory! sad memory!

Perhaps it was because a change had suddenly come over the sky and clouds were shutting out the sun that the old veteran was saddened for a moment. For we must all confess that when the summer sun shines down upon us in its matchless glory, our hearts expand, and we feel blithe and happy; but when the clouds shroud it from our view the shadow falls upon our hearts as well.

Or perhaps it was because, as he looked into Maudie's big open childish eyes, he saw for one flashing moment the reflection of a dear face, which to him now was only a dream of the almost forgotten past.

But, however it was, the colonel simply suppressed a rising tear, and opening the drawer said softly:

"Well, Maudie dear, to-day I will show you some of my strange things."

And when he pulled out the drawer and placed all the odds and ends upon the table, sure enough there was a medley of curious articles before him. Some were loose, some carefully folded up with names and dates upon the wrappers: strange coins and medals brought from the far East, tigers' teeth and Chinese cash, nose-rings worn in Thibet, and quaint ivory puzzles from Japan. There were curious old rings, too, of various shapes and sizes, which would have aroused the interest of any bric-a-brac hunter in Europe. On one of these rings Maudie seized with childish curiosity because it was the strangest and the largest.

"Oh, grandpa, what is this? what is this?" said the little lady of eight in quite a dictatorial tone, as all ladies of eight and upwards can use when they want to be attended to. "What is it, grandpa? Tell me quickly."

"Well, Maudie," said the colonel very slowly, "*that is your own ring!*"

But as he spoke the shade of sadness deepened on his face, for that was the very ring that he had found on the dead body of his son after the battle of Allabapore, and which he could never look at without a vivid memory of that glorious, but bloody day on which he had lost his only son.

"Mine! grandpa," said the little lady, "then I'll wear it."

"Whenever you wear it, they say it will bring you sunshine. I hope it will, Maudie."

The little girl looked at it with her big brown eyes, and turned it in her hands, and slipped it on to her biggest finger, and then on to her thumb.

It certainly was a curious ring, a *very* curious ring. It was clearly Oriental both in design and execution, and seemed to be old and tarnished. The part where the stone should be was a very large circular disc of silver, swelling out like a full moon and having round its edge a number of protruding little stars, fifteen in all. Maudie insisted on counting them. In the centre of the silver disc were some words engraved in one of those quaint cursive characters written from right to left that set European scholars at defiance. It might have been a verse from the Koran, only the language was clearly not Arabic.

The colonel, although he had some acquaintance with the sacred tongue of the Moslems, as well as of Urdu Hindee and Persian, had never been able to make head or tail of this inscription. All he knew was that his son had brought the ring back with him after a difficult military expedition in a wild mountainous country, and had said laughing that it was a magic ring and would bring sunshine to its owner, and also that he intended it for his little Maudie when she grew up and got married. After that, Lieutenant Stapleton had never mentioned the ring again, but it was found on his dead body after the battle, carefully wrapt up as though it were a talisman or something particularly precious. How could it fail to have sad associations for the old colonel—associations that linked themselves not only with the gallant young soldier, who was sleeping his long sleep under the fires of the Eastern sun, but also with the rosy little maiden who was now seated on his knee toying with her quaint and mysterious legacy?

They were still sitting together when the sound of wheels was heard and a carriage rolled up to the door of the bungalow.

Maudie was on her feet in a moment, looking out of the window. "Oh, grandpa, it's old Sir John. And Bobby is there too. Oh, I am so glad. Bobby is going to teach me how to make flies to fish with." And Maudie was out of the room and at the carriage door before the coachman had pulled up the horses.

It was clear from the colonel's smile that he was pleased too.

For Sir John Burnside was his nearest neighbour, as well as his ground landlord, seeing that Delhi Cottage was on the Burnside estate. Now Sir John Burnside was not only a large landowner and a political power in the county, but he was reputed to be a very wealthy man. His family pedigree, indeed, going backwards, stopped abruptly at his grandfather, who had been a Bristol merchant in the good old days when sugar and slaves were equally acceptable as merchandise to the enterprising spirits of that famous seaport, while the colonel on the other hand, though a poor man, was the scion of a family that had mated with half the peerage. Still the colonel, when he was in a good humour, as he was to-day, liked to see Sir John, and his bouncing little boy Bobby too, the latter of whom had reached the mature and rollicking age of fourteen, while Sir John on his side loved to drive over to the bungalow and in his own mind to patronize the "Old Nabob" as he called the colonel. He did not quite know what a nabob was, but that is neither here nor there.

The colonel rose and went to his cottage door to welcome his rich neighbour, shook hands with him courteously and inquired after the health of Lady Burnside, not omitting to take due notice of Master Bobbie.

"Glad to see you, colonel ; glad to see you," said the little old baronet.

Sir John was a short podgy little individual with a bald plateau on the top of his big head surrounded with a thick semicircle of brushwood, irony-grey in colour and very stubbly in character, which did duty for hair. His eye was keen but kindly, and his broad face was fringed with heavy antiquated whiskers. You would probably have taken him for a retired grocer if you had not been told that he was the great Sir John Burnside, of Burnside Hall.

"Glad to find you at home," went on Sir John ; "I want to have a private talk with you, but this urchin of mine, whom I distinctly told to remain at home, waylaid the carriage at the park gates and got up with the coachman without my knowledge or consent."

Sir John evidently thought he had been badly treated by his young hopeful.

"Don't be angry with him, Sir John," said the colonel, "boys will be boys ; and besides, you ought to take it as a compliment

that at fourteen he is so fond of being with his father ; eh, Sir John ? ”

“ Not a bit, sir ; you don't understand boys, not having any of your own.”

The colonel winced visibly and was on the point of speaking, when Sir John, who saw the mistake he had made and was now walking by the colonel's side up and down in front of the bungalow, said very softly :

“ My dear old friend, I said the wrong thing ; that is what I am always doing. All the world knows that your son died a hero's death and his little Maudie is all that remains to you. What I was going to say was that that urchin of mine did not come for the sake of *my* company. Lord bless you, no ! It is Maudie that is the attraction ; that is the fun of it.”

The colonel's smile shone out again from his handsome face as he glanced across the pretty lawn where, under the trees, Master Bobbie and Miss Maud were engaged in a most animated conversation.

“ Yes,” said the colonel, as he looked at them, “ they are almost like brother and sister.”

Sir John stopped abruptly and glanced at the colonel with a very quizzical expression in his shrewd old eyes :

“ Brother and sister ! Egad, if they were brother and sister, sir, they would soon be slapping each other. That's my experience of life ; is it not yours, colonel ? ”

The two old gentlemen paused for a moment in their walk and laughed a quiet little laugh at the ironies of life, and just at this moment the sun, which for nearly a quarter of an hour had been obscured by the fleecy clouds that were chasing each other over the sky, burst out again in its full refulgent glory. Immediately after, Maudie was heard crying out in the distance, “ Look, grandpa ! Oh, look ! the sunshine, the sunshine.”

The colonel did not understand what she meant till he saw that the little lady had kept firm possession of her magic ring and was holding it up in her hand.

“ I told Bobbie it would bring out the sunshine, and he said it couldn't ; but it did, didn't it, grandpa ? and it always will, won't it ? ”

Maudie was evidently in deep earnest, and the colonel was amused at the serious view she had taken of his few words. “ I hope so, darling,” he said, “ with all my heart ; but I very much



doubt it." The last few words were in an undertone to Sir John, to whom he added, "Leave Bob to play under the trees and let us go into my study and have a quiet cigar. Then you can tell me your news."

"To be sure," said Sir John, "to be sure. I want to tell you about a wonderful discovery that my man Rogers has made on the Three Acres. Rogers, you know, is a Cornishman, and knows all about mining and he is convinced that there is a seam of coal somewhere down below the hill on my South Farm, and he thinks there's iron there too. He wants me to sink a shaft"—and the two old gentlemen disappeared into the colonel's *sanctum sanctorum*, and in a few minutes were smoking Manillas and discussing coal measures and iron ore and blasting furnaces and percentages and royalties, and altogether building a *château d'Espagne*, not upwards towards heaven, but downwards in the unexplored bowels of the earth.

Presently they were interrupted by juvenile shouts from the garden, and on going to the window they had a full view of a Derby Day on a small scale. Master Bobbie was in front holding something as high as he could in the air while he tore along in and out of the big trees with little Maudie after him as fast as she could run. Miss Mary Graham, too, Maudie's governess, had joined in the race, and a pretty little scene it was. Bobbie had got the ring, and it was a case of catch-who-catch-can.

The baronet threw up the window: "Robert, behave yourself." But Master Robert paid no attention. "Robert, stop running." Robert did stop running. He turned his curly head round for one moment and looked at his sire in the distance. And then finding himself at the bottom of a convenient tree, he shoved the ring into his pocket, made a leap for the lowest branch, swarmed the tree in two minutes, and before Maudie and Miss Mary could catch up to him he was safely perched on the highest bough.

It was all fun and a children's game.

"Don't be afraid, colonel," said Sir John with a touch of parental pride; "egad, that boy of mine is like a squirrel. 'Pon my soul, I think one of my ancestors must have been a steeple jack."

"Bobbie, Bobbie, don't go on the branch, don't, don't," cried Maudie in the distance.

"You mustn't, Master Robert," cried Miss Graham.

But Master Robert was wilful. The two old gentlemen were now on the lawn like two conscientious constables coming to keep the peace. Crash, bang went the bough. A rustle of leaves, a crackling of snapped branches, a screaming of female voices, and a heavy thud, and Master Robert Burnside was on mother earth.

Sir Robert and the colonel ran. It was a good many years since the legs of either of them had renewed their youth in such a fashion. There was a group round the old ash tree, all anxious, all frightened. But Master Bobbie was standing in the middle of them, rather scratched and rather pale, but erect on his two legs. There was a babel of voices, sympathies and scoldings all blended together.

"Here's your ring, Maudie," said Bobbie, puffing as he spoke; "you know I didn't mean to keep it."

"Oh, Bobbie, you can keep it if you like; but are you hurt?"

"I'll never take it again, Maudie; I only wanted to see if it would bring out the sunshine for me."

"Robert," said Sir John, in his sternest of voices, wiping his bald head, from which his hat had escaped in his run, "you are a bad boy."

"Not at all, Sir John," said the colonel, "all boys are alike."

"Egad, then," said the baronet, replacing his hat, which the governess had recovered for him, "it seems to me that that ring of yours is going to cause considerable commotion in the world."

"Not being a prophet, I can't say," replied Colonel Stapleton with a smile; "but I hope Master Robert will always have the good luck to fall on his feet."

"Grandpapa," said Maudie, who always liked to put in a word, "perhaps it was because he had my magic ring."

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

And presently the carriage rolled away with the grisly old baronet and his young hopeful, while the colonel replaced the mischievous ring in his drawer of quaint old things, and Mary went about her work as usual.

A trifling incident in a gentle, quiet life, and that was all. And so the curtain falls. But it will rise again.

## CHAPTER II.

— WHEN TEN SWIFT YEARS HAD FLOWN.

"THE Chariot of Time," which the poets are so fond of describing, with its never resting wheels, ought to be portrayed by

poet and painter alike after the fashion of the old British war chariot that took the Romans so much by surprise. As it speeds along, behold there are long sharp scythes projecting on each side, mowing down human beings to right and left. And like its Celtic counterpart, the metaphoric Chariot of Chronos ever takes a zigzag path, sparing on the right and slaying on the left, or darting in the opposite direction and committing havoc in the most unlikely places.

But whatever other mischief Old Time had committed in the decade during which Maudie Stapleton had slipped from lively eight to lovely eighteen, he had had the good taste to keep his scythes away from Delhi Cottage. The colonel had reached the mellow age of eighty; Miss Mary Graham had bloomed into a buxom woman of five-and-thirty, and still insisted on taking care of her young mistress as if she were still in short frocks. It requires an earthquake or a revolution, or at least a wedding, to persuade those who love us and live with us year after year, that we have passed out of the harbour of childhood and are actually sailing on the open sea of life.

And Maudie had grown into a beauty, *un vero bottone di rosa*, as the Italians say, or rather she had developed from a lovely child into a lovelier maiden. "God make thee good as thou art beautiful," must have been whispered over her cradle by some benevolent fairy, for her soul was as pure as the virgin tabernacle that enshrined it, and her heart was as gentle as her soft hazel eyes that could see nothing but goodness in the world around her. Like the rest of us, she saw things and persons round about her not in the cold light of external truth, but coloured by the tints of her own heart. So to her all the world was bright and every one was good, and her life, though a quiet, uneventful one, was lit up with sunshine.

But Time, the grim charioteer, had not behaved quite so benevolently to the great house in the neighbourhood. He had driven his chariot one winter's evening, armed with a very sharp scythe indeed, into Burnside Hall, and poor old Sir John had been swept away and gathered to his unknown forefathers. Lady Burnside, with her widow's cap, lived on drearily in the great mansion that her husband's father had built in the pride of the curiously acquired wealth of the old Bristol house. But what had become of Master Bob in these eventful ten years that

had lifted him from the bread-and-butter age of fourteen to the smiling pedestal of four-and-twenty?

Master Bob—we beg his pardon, Sir Robert Burnside, Bart., of Burnside Hall, Devon—was a remarkably well-known man in the world of fashion. He had inherited the paternal acres, which to his grief he found somewhat trammelled with mortgages; but instead of clearing off these mortgages, he added to them year by year. He was heard of occasionally as driving a four-in-hand in the Bois de Boulogne. Then a paragraph in the *Morning Post* alluded to him as driving a tandem race with a Russian prince in the Lichtentaler Allee, in Baden-Baden. From time to time he condescended to visit the foggy land of his nativity, and was heard of at Epsom or Goodwood. On these occasions he usually ran down to Devonshire and paid a visit to his old mother at the hall, and if we must tell the whole truth, he never failed to drive over to Delhi Cottage, to pay his respects to the colonel. As to whether it was exclusively for the colonel's sake or not, the gossips of the neighbourhood were not unanimous. He had been heard to say to his mother, after one of these flying visits, that there wasn't a girl in France or Germany that could touch Maud Stapleton in anything at all. "She beats them all in a canter," were reported to have been his exact words. But then, there were certain queer stories (true or false) about his goings-on in Paris, and public opinion had set it down as an article of faith that the young baronet must marry money.

Such was the state of affairs when on another summer evening the dear old colonel and his granddaughter, whom he loved as the apple of his eye, were seated under the biggest and thickest of the trees on their pretty lawn. Little Maudie was sitting near him. But we must not call her little Maudie any longer, for she is now a graceful young lady, dressed indeed in the simplest of white dresses, crowned with a big sun-hat, but looking like a queen who had thrown aside her robes of ceremony and put on the costume of an ideal shepherdess. There were two other girls with her, daughters of a neighbouring squire, and the three young ladies were laughing and chatting like three merry birds twittering on a tree. The colonel was smoking a Manilla cigar and reading his London paper, but from time to time he glanced aside to see the little group of maidens; and the old soldier's

face was lit up with that gentle smile which made the Persian poet say that there is no beauty like that of old age.

Presently a footfall was heard on the gravel walk in the distance, and the three girls, knowing it was Mercury, the messenger of the modern gods, to wit the postman, ran off helter-skelter for the letters. There was quite a handful, some for Violet and Rosie, Maud's two merry visitors, one for Miss Maud, and no less than three, an unusual number, for Colonel Stapleton.

Oh, for the joy that the postman brings us, and hey lack-a-day for the sorrow.

The girls were happy as they read their various letters all full of chit-chat and brimful of brightness, but as the colonel read the first of his budget an unmistakable cloud chased the sunshine from his handsome face. He rose silently and walked alone under the trees that led down to the brook cutting off the grounds of Delhi Cottage from the neighbouring pasture lands. Let us look over his shoulder and read the letter with him.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have paid the annual premium as per receipt. You have a perfect right to inquire into the affairs of the Burnside estate since you hold a tenancy thereon as you describe. I regret to inform you that the young baronet has fallen into the hands of Messrs. Shortt and Sharpe, who have encouraged him to mortgage the whole of his estate. They have found the money and they have induced him to believe that certain mines which his father started on the estate are sure to bring him in a fortune that will redeem his property. They have themselves sent down a manager to take charge of the workings, which I am informed are very costly, but hitherto nothing satisfactory has been discovered. If Messrs. Shortt and Sharpe foreclose, you will of course become their tenant, though I do not suppose they will be likely to raise your rent. This, no doubt, is the object of your inquiry.

"Believe me to remain, your obedient servant,

"ROGER ROGERSON."

But this was not the only letter that the colonel had received. There were two others. The second was from his old friend Lord Dawlish, who, as is well known, is a large and wealthy mine owner in Devonshire and Cornwall. Here it is:

"Dawlish Castle, Devonshire.

"DEAR OLD BOY,

"Delighted to do anything for you. I sent a smart foreman of my Trecallyon mine *incog.* to look at the workings that you seem so anxious about. He has inspected them and reports that the manager is an old Welshman named Morgan. Either he doesn't know his business or else he is playing a game. He is sinking shafts and running adits just where he shouldn't. My man thinks the property looks likely, but says he doubts if Taffy is going straight. Hope you haven't invested. Can I do anything more for you? Commend me to your little Maudie. Lady D. and the boys are blooming. We start the day after to-morrow for a couple of months' yachting.

"Believe me, my dear friend, always yours,

"DAWLISH."

And the third letter, written in pencil, was as follows:

"DEAR COLONEL,

"Here I am in jolly old England again. Shall run over to see you this evening.

"BOB."

This was the colonel's budget. He walked up and down in the summer sunshine, his white head uncovered and his blue eyes, still undimmed by four-score years, looking over the sunny fields with a far-away look that showed his mind was a thousand miles away.

"I am very, very sorry," mused the colonel. "I do hope he won't come to-day."

Now the last remark of Colonel Stapleton requires a little explanation. He had known Bobbie from about the third day after he made his first appearance on the boards of the theatre of life. And he was fond of him. He had often stood between the curly-headed little romp and his bald-headed sire when thunder was heard from behind the scenes. But he had other little favourites besides, and amongst these must be counted the whole family of his neighbour, Sir Roger Leonard. Sir Roger had a splendid family of five bouncing boys and two girls. With Sir Roger and his five boys and the deeds they did our muse has nothing to do, but the two sweet girls Violet and Rosie



Leonard were just at this moment chattering and laughing under the trees with his granddaughter, with whom they were spending a few days before going up to London. Violet was twenty two and Rosie was eighteen. Rosie, the younger, was a dark-eyed little fairy that every painter wanted to transfer to his canvas. Violet, the elder, was a happy-hearted romping young lady whose eyes were always twinkling with fun and unconsciously drawing the gentlemen after her. Now amongst the many bits of male iron that this unconscious magnet had drawn towards her at various times was Master Bob (so at least rumour said), and the old colonel had made up his mind long ago that dear Violet Leonard would one day be Lady Burnside, of Burnside Hall, Devon.

That is why he sighed when he heard how badly money matters were going with Sir Bob and said aloud: "I am very, very sorry. I do hope he won't come to-day." But wishes won't stop a well-built dog-cart with a smart bay pony in front of it doing ten miles an hour, and in such a suitable conveyance for a single gentleman Sir Robert was bowling up the avenue to Delhi Cottage at this very moment.

Before the old colonel could retrace his steps the dog-cart had pulled up and Sir Robert was shaking hands with the three girls all at once. It was clear that he was a favourite with the gentle sex. And a fine young fellow he was. He was tall and broad-shouldered and well dressed. He was dark and curly-headed and as full of life as a boy. His moustache was not big enough to hide his laughing lips and his eyes had a merry twinkle that was, if anything, rather too mischievous.

"Oh, Bobby, why didn't you tell us you were coming?"

"So I did."

"No, you didn't."

"Ask the commander-in-chief. Where is he?"

"There he is on the broad walk. How long are you going to stay?"

"Only a couple of hours. I've come to see the three witches—I beg your pardon, the three graces," and off the four big children went under the trees, chatting and joking and waving hands to the colonel in the distance.

Now the four big children—for men and women may be children at any age—were bright and rather frivolous, but the



colonel was sad and anxious; anxious about Sir Bob, and equally anxious about the heart of Violet Leonard. What if this young rascal had come down to besiege the citadel of Violet's heart and make her surrender it to a penniless lover? A whole ton-load of responsibility suddenly seemed to come down from the heavens and fasten itself on the aged shoulders of the old soldier.

"I mustn't let him be alone with Violet," said the colonel to himself, and like a skilful strategist he laid his plans in his own mind. By this time he was in the middle of the group of laughing youngsters. He shook hands with Bob and asked after Lady Burnside, and was soon chatting about the latest news from London.

"By Jove," said Bob, "we are under the old tree that I tumbled down from; are we not, Maudie?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Maud; "I always have a sort of superstitious feeling about that tree. You came down plump."

"Yes, but I had your magic ring, you know. By the way, where is it? Does it always bring out sunshine?" and he laughed a merry little laugh as he remembered how he once clambered up to the topmost bough to test the power of Maudie's talisman.

"Well," said Maudie, "it brought you down safe and sound at any rate."

"Yes, Bob," put in the colonel, "you fell on your feet that time; perhaps you won't—but, well, well, let us hope for the best."

And so they chatted on, and presently Bob and the three girls were sauntering down towards the brook when the colonel perceived that Maudie and Rose were lingering behind and Bob and Violet were getting away in front. "Just as I expected," sighed the colonel.

Then his generalship came in.

Like most other generalship begotten of male brains, it was of the simplest nature. He strolled to the cottage and sent a message by Mary that he wanted to see Violet, as he was going to write a letter to her father. How much more subtle generalship would be if the female intellect could be brought to direct military operations in the field! Moltke would be nowhere. But let us not jump over the hedge that separates actuality from speculation. The colonel's generalship, such as it was, was quite successful. Violet came rushing in and Rosie, too, anxious to send all manner of messages to papa and mamma

and the five youthful heroes whom our muse has distinctly declined to have anything to do with.

And Sir Robert and Miss Maud roamed together, happy-hearted, alone, under the tall trees, with the arrows of sunset darting between the rustling branches. It was the old, old story. She did not expect it, and yet when the words were said, she knew that her heart would have withered up if they had never been spoken. He was as true as he was handsome. Her heart went out to him, and the love-light that sparkled in her eyes outshone the glory of the setting sun. He told her how he had loved her when they were children wandering hand in hand in the lanes of Devon, and how, amid all the gaieties of foreign cities, her face had been ever before him, and the thought of her had reined him in and kept him from the dissipations that lead youth to ruin. He added a few words about his worldly affairs. "You know, darling, that the estate is encumbered, but I saw my London solicitors before I came down, and they assure me all is right. They have chosen a first-rate man to take up the mining work on the Three Acres and on the hill on the South Farm, and before long we shall be turning out coal and iron ore that will pay off all the mortgages and make us rich and happy." And Maudie lingered on the word "us." Now they were linked together. She was to be part of him, and all that was his was to be hers as well. It was not the money she thought of, but the linking together of two hearts and two lives. And Maudie was very happy.

"Bobbie" (the old familiar name rushed to her lips), "let us go in and tell grandpapa. I am sure the news will be a joy to him."

"You may depend on it, he has guessed all about it years ago," said Sir Robert.

"Was it not good of him to call the two girls away and give us a half-hour to ourselves? But grandpa is always so thoughtful."

So it always is in life! We get praised for the good deeds we never did, and saddled with the peccadillos of somebody else.

Just then Miss Mary Graham came to say that Sir Robert's dog-cart had been waiting at the door for more than half-an-hour and the bay pony was getting very restive.

"All right, Miss Mary," said Bob, "I'll be there in a minute."

And Miss Mary wondered what mischief the young couple had been up to, they both looked so flushed and strange.

Before jumping into his dog-cart Sir Robert walked into the cottage and found Colonel Stapleton in his study with the two Leonard girls, who felt themselves particularly favoured in being admitted to that rather exclusive spot.

"Colonel," said Sir Robert, with a very serious face, "I want to say something very important to you before I go."

The colonel looked up, and seeing the solemn expression the usually bright face of the young man wore, he jumped at once to the conclusion that Sir Robert had discovered for himself the perilous state in which he stood as regards his financial prospects; that he had come over to speak to the colonel on the subject as the friend of his dead father as well as his own, and that his light-heartedness an hour ago was merely assumed.

"Yes, yes," said the colonel, "but we can't talk about these matters just now," glancing at Violet and Rosie. "It is a serious matter, but I have long expected it."

Sir Robert was thunderstruck at the melancholy tone in which the old colonel alluded to an event that in Robert's opinion ought to have filled his old heart with joy, but the thought flashed through his mind that to the grandfather there would be as much of sadness as of joy when the darling of his heart and the stay of his old age should be taken from him. A pang of pity touched him and he felt his eyes grow moist, so he sought shelter in silence and merely grasped the old man's proffered hand.

"Not a word now, my dear boy," said the colonel, "not a word. But come over again in a few days and we will talk everything over."

Another warm shake of the hands—all round this time, for the three girls were standing at the door—one quick look of beaming love from Maudie's eyes, and then Sir Robert jumped into his dog-cart, the happiest man in Devonshire. The bay pony was pawing the ground in his eagerness to start, the whip was in the driver's hand when the colonel walked round to the other side of the dog-cart and hurriedly said to Sir Robert:

"Here, Bob; I have been hesitating whether I ought to tell you what I have heard from Lord Dawlish. Here is his letter; take it and read it when you get home."

Sir Robert had scarcely time to utter a hasty "thank you"—wondering what on earth Lord Dawlish had to do with his engagement to Maud Stapleton—and to thrust the letter into his

pocket, before the bay was off at a spanking trot, and Delhi Cottage shut out behind the trees.

It appeared in the papers some time ago that a man went about for a whole day with a cake of dynamite in his pocket. He had picked it up and thought it was a piece of clay. In very much the same situation was poor Sir Robert as he drove home that day happy and bright and heedless of all care, not knowing that he had a bomb-shell in his pocket destined to explode before many hours and blow his fabric of happiness to the skies.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A BRAVE HEART.

THE next day brought with it again the glorious sunshine of English summertime. The birds were chirping in the golden air when Sir Robert came down to an early breakfast in what we may call his ancestral hall, seeing that he had actually had a grandfather who lived in it. He had made up his mind to go and inspect the work at his mine, where he hoped every day that the seam of iron ore would be reached that was to enrich him for life, or the coal be found that Shortt and Sharpe told him might be opened out at any moment. The bomb-shell had not exploded yet, for he had forgotten all about the letter which his friend the colonel had given him to read. When he returned last night, he had kissed his old mother, who was very infirm and rarely moved from her own rooms, and told her his glorious news. Maudie was to be her daughter; and the old lady petted him once more as she used to do when he was a child, and then shed a few quiet tears, which were tears of pride and happiness more than of sadness. But the old have ever a silver thread of sorrow interwoven with the brightest of golden thoughts.

Morning had come and Sir Robert was off to his El Dorado.

When he reached the point where a shelving tunnel sloped down out of sight into the hill-side, with great heaps of débris piled up on both sides, he found a fustian-clad workman seated quietly on a hillock of stones smoking a black cutty pipe.

"Good morning, my man," said Sir Robert. "Is the overseer about? I want to go down into the workings."

The man gazed at him indifferently, evidently not knowing who he was.

"No admission, guv'nor; them's my horders. Old Morgan ain't here, and nobody goes in excep' the boss takes him round."

Sir Robert was taken aback.

"Well, where is he? Tell him I want to see him."

"Oh, he ain't a-come yet, and mebbe he won't be here for a hour or more. And wot's more, guv'nor, I guess he won't let yer see the bloomin' mine when he does come. There was a feller came spyin' about last week, and the old boss has got 'cute. He says his horders from the lawyer fellers hup in Lunnon is to keep things on the Q. T."

The young baronet felt a sudden rush of anger sweeping over his astonished soul.

"Look here, my good man, do you know who I am?"

"Well, guv'nor, I guess you've been sent here by that young fool at the Hall yonder. Why doesn't he look after his own property hissel? Heverybody looks arter hissel' in this world, or if he don't, wot d'ye expect? Anyway, you can't see the diggins till old Morgan comes. Do yer think yer could give me a plug of bacca, guv'nor, 'cos my blooming pipe is a-going hout?"

With an effort to restrain his temper, Sir Robert determined to leave the matter alone for the present, to return to the Hall and send a letter to the overseer by a servant, requesting his presence in the course of the afternoon. *A propos* of the plug of "bacca" he put his hand into his side pocket and pulled out his tobacco pouch, and with it a letter—the bomb-shell which had not yet exploded. He gave about an ounce of Bristol bird's-eye to the surly workman, who would have appreciated pig-tail much better, and turned on his heel.

He walked a couple of hundred yards along a beaten pathway trying to persuade himself that there was nothing to be alarmed about. Mr. Morgan might be a very scrupulous and conscientious manager, who did not want his employers' affairs to be exposed to the public. But it was no use. When the suspicion of a truth flashes upon us the truth itself is already half exposed to view. He sat down on a stile that crossed his way, over which a spreading ash stretched its branches, shading him from the growing heat of the sun. From this rustic perch his eye roamed over undulating corn fields and meadow lands which were all his own; and the gable ends of his happy home, to which he hoped so soon to bring a blushing bride, were just visible in

the distance. Could it be that the mine was a bubble? Could it be that he had no resources to repay the heavy mortgages on the estate? Impossible! Only three days ago Mr. Shortt had told him with a smile that there was no reason whatever for anxiety. It was true that a heavy sum was due in a few days for interest on the mortgages—about a thousand pounds, he understood—but that would be arranged by the firm. He recalled every word that the senior partner had said. But what was this letter in his hand? Oh, something about Maudie that Colonel Stapleton had given him to read. He would see it at once. He opened the envelope and read Lord Dawlish's short epistle. No explosion of dynamite that did not actually kill ever left a man more dazed than the poor young baronet was when the airy sentences had conveyed their full meaning to his mind. There it was in black and white:

"Either he doesn't know his business or else he is playing a game. He is sinking shafts and running adits just where he shouldn't. My man thinks the property looks likely, but says he thinks Taffy isn't straight. Hope you haven't invested."

And this from a man whom Sir Robert only knew by name, but who had the reputation of being the most experienced mine-owner in South England.

How Sir Robert got home he scarcely knew. He walked like a man in a dream. Once there he locked himself into the library and paced up and down. Was he on the brink of ruin? Was his dream of love and fortune to be but the baseless fabric of a vision? a mere mirage seen for a moment and doomed to melt away like the airy phantasies of the desert? At last he paused. "After all," he said aloud, "it is only a suspicion. Perhaps this Morgan, or whatever his name is, does not understand the mine, and Shortt and Sharpe are acting honourably after all. Lord Dawlish's man says himself that the mine looks 'likely.' Anyway, I will write to London at once." And so he did. He went to his writing-desk and in a firm hand wrote fully to his London lawyers. He told them that he had good reason for believing that the manager whom they had sent down was not carrying out the explorations in a satisfactory manner, that no immediate success was anticipated, and that he thought it would be better to secure a more experienced man. He ended by alluding to the heavy sum which would fall due for interest



on the mortgages in a few days, and thanked Messrs. Shortt and Sharpe for kindly undertaking to induce the mortgagees not to press for immediate payment, or to arrange it themselves if necessary.

But Sir Robert was a miserable man. The dumb animals have a strange prophetic feeling when a thunderstorm or an earthquake is about to shake the world, and we of the higher creation, as we are proud to call ourselves, often share their sensation of a coming terror before misfortune bursts on us.

This was the case with poor Sir Robert. Oh, for the pity of it! He had trusted his father's old solicitors as he trusted heaven. Youth is linked with confidence as age with suspicion. And he had never doubted them. They had told him that his estate was perfectly safe because the iron mines (to say nothing about the possibility of coal) would wipe away all the mortgages and in the meantime he might live abroad and enjoy himself. And now he saw for the first time that he was absolutely in their power. He had trusted them and leant on them as a child leans on its parents, knowing it is safe. Now a flash of lightning seemed to come out of a cloud (perhaps it came from his little parcel of dynamite), and showed him the cold truth, that where business comes in at the door, friendship flies out at the window. But why linger on the young baronet's sad thoughts? He felt a great blow was coming. Two weary days he waited for a letter from Shortt and Sharpe. There was nothing to do but wait. He would not go over to Delhi Cottage, because he would not risk seeing his darling again until his fate was sealed. If he were a ruined man, farewell to Maudie, farewell to happiness, farewell to old England. He would see that his dear old mother, who had a little annuity of her own, was settled as comfortably as her means allowed and then he would emigrate to the Far West, which had always had a fascination for him, and at the worst he could turn cowboy and hold his own. The spirit of youth was still alive in his breast, and if it had not been for Maudie and his old mother, he thought he could afford to whistle at the loss of all his fortune.

In due course the lawyers' letter was delivered at the Hall. It was brought into the breakfast room with several others by the footman on a silver tray. Sir Robert recognized it in a moment, placed it with the others quietly on one side and helped himself to a little more cold pigeon pie. He was breakfasting alone, reading a local morning paper.



"George," said Sir Robert.

"Yes, Sir Robert," said the footman.

"Take these letters into the library and leave them on the table. I'll read them presently."

"Yes, Sir Robert." But the footman wondered why he didn't open his letters at once as ordinarily constructed mortals of both sexes always do. He disappeared with the letters, however, and Sir Robert proceeded with his pigeon pie and his *Exeter Gazette*, in alternate bites, so to speak. Presently George reappeared looking rather flurried.

"Beg your pardon, Sir Robert, but there's a man at the hall door says he wants to see you very particular."

"Indeed," said Sir Robert, "pray, who is the gentleman?"

"He ain't no gentleman at all," burst out George in all the fullness of his heart; "he's a low-bred blay-gård, that's what he is—and what's more, he's drunk."

"Then tell him to go away."

"So I did, Sir Robert, and he cussed and swore that hawful and put his foot in between the door like, as I thought I must have hup to him and knocked him down."

Now George was of a distinctly weak physique, and for him to be "up" and face a "blay-gård," who was made rather exuberant by early potations, was so obviously out of the question, that Sir Robert rose from the table at once, saying quietly, "All right, George, don't mind; I'll attend to him." And as George gazed at the broad shoulders and athletic figure of the young baronet disappearing through the doorway, he chuckled with a feeling of already satisfied vengeance and muttered, "Now you'll catch it, you tipsy old scoundrel! Call me pumpkin head indeed! My master will give you a pumpkin head, I do hope to mussy!" George was evidently very angry.

But Sir Robert was not animated by pugilistic thoughts as he strode into the entrance hall. One glance at his footman's foe, who sure enough had pushed himself right into the house, sufficed to show him that it was no other than the fustian-clad navvy who was acting as sentry the other day at the entrance to the mine.

"Oh, it's you, is it? My good fellow, I remember your face. What is it you want here?"

"Want to see *you*, guv'nor; my name's Jim Thompson. You see I didn't know as you were the barronit yersel' when you gave

me a plug of 'bacca t'other day, or p'raps I might ha' split then. Perhaps I might and perhaps I mightn't. But me and the boss can't pull together no longer, and blest if I don't blow on the whole bloomin' plant."

Slang is the poetry of the great unwashed, the language in which they pour forth their deepest thoughts and feelings, and Jim was clearly about to soar to still greater heights, when Sir Robert, who had not listened to a word he said, interrupted him pretty brusquely:

"Look here, my good man, if you have anything to say to me you had better take a walk outside and come back in about a quarter of an hour, I shall be free then."

The fact was that he felt it was cowardice to put off reading his London letter any longer. It had to be faced, and the sooner the better. So he let the poetical Jim go for a stroll, and he walked into his library. He read his other letters first, and then tore open the one from Shortt and Sharpe. A lingering hope still fluttered at his heart, but it flew away as his eyes rested on the first words.

"DEAR SIR ROBERT,

"We were on the point of writing to you when we received your favour of the 27th inst. We regret to inform you that we have failed to induce the mortgagees to postpone the payment of interest due by you on the 1st prox., and in view of the report which you give us of the mining prospects on your estate, which has taken us completely by surprise, it will be impossible for us to obtain for you any further advances. As, however, we should deeply regret the foreclosure that you anticipate, which would entail, we fear, the loss of the entire Burnside estate, as it is mortgaged to its full value, we trust you will be able to forward to us on or before the 1st prox. a cheque for £1,125, the interest payable by you on that date. We have every reason to be satisfied that Mr. David Morgan is an upright and competent miner, and we feel sure that any failure in the prospects of the mine is not due as you suppose to his want of capacity, but to the nature of the enterprise, which we deeply regret. We are, &c., your obedient servants,

"SHORTT AND SHARPE."

Sir Robert read the letter twice over; the second time very

carefully, word by word, as if it were a matter of business that referred to some unfortunate client who was no acquaintance of his. He noted how every word he had said against the prospects of the mine was taken hold of and made an excuse for a *volte-face*. He had been cheated by the lawyers. The mine was like other mines, a possibility and a speculation. But the lawyers had involved him in debt till he was a fly in a spider's web, and now behold the two spiders having got him fairly caught in their airy meshes were gently stealing down, as spiders do, to suck his blood.

Sir Robert folded the letter and placed it in his pocket. For a few moments he leant his elbow on the table and leaned his face upon his hand. Then he rose to his feet in all the grandeur of his youthful strength.

"I have life before me," he said, "and health and a clear conscience. I have lost my father's estate; I have lost my inheritance. But I will make a hard fight not to lose my darling Maudie. I love her! I love her! I love her! I will work for her. I will go to her and ask her to wait for me. Surely if other men can work their way to fortune I can do the same." He raised his hand in the air and broke out into a smile. "God willing," he said, "I will be the hewer of my own fortune!"

He walked out into the hall, took up his hat, and paused for a moment. Then he quickly mounted the staircase, two steps at a time, and went into his mother's room. He kissed her on both cheeks, after the continental fashion, and said:

"Mother, dear, don't be anxious about what I have to say. I think we shall have to give up the old place. But I fancy I can make you quite as comfortable in London. I am going up in a day or two to find quarters for you."

"But, dear Robert, this is so sudden."

"Yes, but, mother dear, don't ask me questions; trust me. Whatever I do my first thought shall be for you."

"Trust you, my dear boy, I always did and always will. You look very pale and anxious. Tell me what has happened."

"Mother dear, I will tell you to-morrow. Don't fret; it is a passing trouble. All troubles pass away, you know." And then he kissed her again, and the old lady shed another tear or two because she thought her darling boy was in sorrow; but she never doubted him, and she felt as if no trouble could ever touch her, because her son was true and noble and strong, and he loved her.

The young baronet strode out of his father's home to walk over to Delhi Cottage. He had determined to see Maudie to tell her everything. He would give her her liberty if she wished it, but would plead for time, a couple of years, perhaps, while he was away in the Far West, and then she could say yes or no. She was so young, only eighteen, and in two years' time she would not yet be of age. Thoughts were rushing through his brain like the clouds that sweep over the heavens when the strong north wind is blowing before a storm. And youth is full of hope.

He had not walked many yards before he came up to the poetical navvy, who was contentedly smoking his black pipe, seated on a heap of gravel.

"Blest if you ain't a long time a-coming, guv'nor. Old pumpkin head wouldn't open the door again, but told me through the winder as you was a-coming out directly."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Sir Robert, who had forgotten all about him. "I'm afraid I am too busy to talk about your affairs just now."

"Oh, that's yer little game, is it?" said Jim.

"Come to the Hall to-morrow. No, to-morrow is Sunday; come on Monday morning, and I'll do what I can for you." Sir Robert had a vague idea that Jim was going to ask some favour for himself, and the grim idea struck him that on Monday, August the first, he would have the dramatic pleasure of telling the navvy that he must transfer his application to Messrs. Shortt and Sharpe, of Bedford Row, London.

"Well, darn me," said Jim, *sotto voce*; "I'm blowed if I don't go and square it with the boss."

The young baronet was hurrying away, but fortunately he turned round again. "Oh, I forgot; you'll want some more 'baccy. Here you are, my worthy friend," and he searched in his side pocket for his tobacco pouch. He had left it at home, so he opened his cigar case and gave Jim half-a-dozen cigars instead. "All right; don't forget to come on Monday morning, and then we'll have a talk," and so saying he stepped out on his way to the old colonel's with a sad heart indeed, but a firm tread, as a man should have who has done no wrong and can face the arrows of outrageous fortune with calm fortitude.

"Dash my buttons, but the barronite is a stunner; so he is," cried Jim. "I'll jest go down to the second level and git some

specimens for to show him on Monday morning. Now, Morgan, ole boss, you look out for squalls. I ain't a-goin' to pick chesnuts out o' th' fire for thee any more."

Jim Thompson's mind was evidently made up; the handful of cigars had turned the scale.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

When Sir Robert reached Delhi Cottage a terrible disappointment was in store for him. Maudie had gone to London with her friends Violet and Rosalie Leonard on a few days' visit. The girls had pressed her to go with them, and the old colonel thought it would do her good, because she was looking a little pale and unlike her usual self. Like so many loving-hearted relatives who insist on knowing what is good for others better than they know themselves, he had insisted on Maudie going. "The change will do you good, darling," he had said to her, "and you can come back next week, you know, in time for the ball at Torquay." So she went.

It was a great blow to Sir Robert, but he made up his mind at once to breathe no word about Maud to her grandfather, unless he alluded to her himself. Sir Robert was under the impression that the colonel knew all about his engagement, but for all that he would be silent till he could first speak to Maud herself. So he merely mentioned his pecuniary plight, or rather, as he called it himself, his "grand smash." In the quietest of tones he explained the whole case to his father's old friend.

"You see," he said, "my father began the mortgages, and I have gone on, trusting to Shortt and Sharpe. The estate is mortgaged up to the hilt. This is Saturday, the 30th of July, and unless I pay one thousand one hundred and twenty-five pounds on Monday everything passes out of my hands and I am a beggar. I know you could not help me, my dear colonel, even if you would, but I have just come over to explain the case to you so that you will understand why my mother and I leave so suddenly, as we shall before the end of next week. I have marred my own fortune, and I must abide the issue."

What could the poor old colonel say? He sympathized with him, and consoled him, and condoled with him, and squeezed his hand as he said good-bye, and, as a parting word of comfort, said he hoped he would soon hear better news from him. How much more can, or will, our nearest and dearest friends do for us?

And when Sir Robert was gone, the good-natured old colonel took up his pen and wrote a long letter to Maudie, hoping she had arrived safely with Violet and Rosie at Thomas's Hotel, where Sir Roger Leonard was staying. Then he told her all about poor Bobbie's visit and all his sorrow. "You see he has come to grief at last, as I always expected his father would do before him. Unless he pays eleven hundred and twenty-five pounds to those old scoundrels, Shortt and Sharpe, on Monday he will be ruined, because all the estate is mortgaged. You had better not say anything about it to Violet because we had better wait, you know."

The colonel, like many old men, was fond of writing long letters, and though he wrote this one with sincere grief, yet he stated the facts accurately, and finished in good time for the Saturday afternoon post.

He little knew what the result of that letter would be. It duly reached London on Sunday morning, July 31st, and as we Englishmen are too careless of mundane things to wish to receive letters, how urgent soever their contents may be, on that consecrated day, it was not put into Miss Stapleton's hands until Monday morning, August the first.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### AN EVENTFUL MONDAY.

ON Monday morning Jim Thompson strolled up to Burnside Hall, smoking the last of his Havana cigars.

By a mere coincidence, Sir Robert, who had slept badly, was pacing up and down outside the Hall, smoking a cigar too. As Jim drew near the young baronet laughed a quiet little sardonic laugh against himself, saying: "I suppose I shall soon be a working man, like my visitor there. I wonder if I shall learn to talk slang."

"Good morning, guv'nor," said Jim, who came up smiling with an air of the greatest satisfaction.

"Good morning," returned Sir Robert.

"The boss has skiddled."

"I don't quite understand," said Sir Robert.

"I mean old Morgan has hooked it. He and two of his pals as worked in the mine bolted yesterday, 'cos they knew I was a-goin' to blow on 'em."

Sir Robert pricked up his ears at this extraordinary piece of intelligence, and invited Jim to be more explicit. Without giving a verbatim report of Jim's exact explanation, it is enough to say that the fustian-clad navvy soon proved to Sir Robert that he was as full of intelligence as a scholar from Oxford. He told his tale in his own way, but it was told clearly and to the point. Mr. Morgan had engaged him and two other men to work in the mine at good wages and something more, but on condition that they held their tongues. A rich seam of ironstone had been laid bare more than twelve months ago, but Morgan had orders to "keep it dark," and to run adits and dig shafts in the opposite direction. This he had done most conscientiously, and with equal conscientiousness his assistants had assured everybody that they had "come upon nought as yet but rubble." But there the seam was, so Jim averred, and to prove it he brought out of his capacious pocket three lumps of stone, reddish in colour, and wonderfully heavy.

"Come and see for yourself, Sir Robert," said Jim; "the other coves have bolted."

The young baronet went, and saw, and was convinced. But alas! it was too late. It was the day of his fate; he had been unable to meet his liabilities, and he well knew that Shortt and Sharpe were far too keen to give him a chance again. He walked sadly back to his old home, and after giving a handsome tip to his guide, closed the hall door behind him, and, making his way to the library, threw himself wearily into an easy-chair. "It would have been better," he said, "if I had never been born."

He was roused by a knock at the door.

"Come in," and enter George.

"A telegram for you, Sir Robert."

"All right, put it on the table there," and George did so, wondering for the second time as he left the room how anybody in his right senses could fail to open letters and telegrams the moment they arrived. George was inexperienced in the sorrows of life.

Sir Robert, on the other hand, felt that that telegram would seal his fate; and he was quite right.

\* \* \* \* \*

At Thomas's Hotel, Berkeley Square, the letters were brought up to the visitors' bedrooms. Consequently Miss Maud Staple-



ton received her grandfather's garrulous letter on Monday morning before she had got out of bed.

At breakfast time Sir Roger and Lady Leonard and the five boys and the two girls made their appearance one after the other, and sat down in the brightest and happiest of moods to their English breakfast table. But their guest did not appear. After a time the waiter was told to ask the chambermaid to go up to Miss Stapleton and tell her that breakfast was ready. Presently the waiter returned to say that the chambermaid had said that Miss Stapleton was not upstairs, and that the porter had said that Miss Stapleton had left a message when she went out to say that she hoped to be back for lunch, but if not they were not to wait for her. Surprise sat upon every face, but Sir Roger, who prided himself on knowing the ways of the female sex—which no male human being ever did yet—said quietly: "Oh, yes; it's all right; I quite understand. Maudie will come back before luncheon time. Waiter, bring me another egg."

Meanwhile poor Maudie had gone through the agonies of despair and wrath and anguish. To them had succeeded the faint glimmer of hope. She remembered that her poor dead father had left her a small annuity, from which she received thirty pounds a year through the Oriental Bank—the London bank, which her grandpapa also dealt with. She would go at once to the manager of that bank, and beg him, on her bended knees, if need be, to give her eleven hundred and twenty-five pounds, and she would give up everything of her own for the future. She did not wait to think, but dressed herself as quickly as she could, and, leaving a message with the porter of the hotel, went out to find a cab. She hailed a hansom, and told the driver to take her to the Oriental Bank.

"Yes, miss, whereabouts is it?"

"I don't exactly know; don't you?"

"No, miss; somewhere in the City; I suppose?"

"Yes; the street has a funny name—Needle-and-thread Street, or something like that."

"Oh, Threadneedle Street, miss," said Jehu, with a broad grin. "I'll find it; jump in, miss."

And in half-a-minute Maudie was being driven whither she scarcely knew, with her thoughts all in a whirl, hoping and fearing what was going to happen. She put her hand into her

pocket to see if she had her purse with her, and found that it was all safe, and also that she had with her her old plaything, the ring that her father had bequeathed to her. She smiled as she drew it out and placed it on her finger.

"Oh, that it would bring me sunshine to-day," she cried; "there is sunshine enough in the sky, but Robert and I are wrapt up in clouds. Still, there is hope."

She replaced it in her pocket, and her thoughts travelled back to the chance of obtaining the much-needed money from the manager of the Oriental Bank. She was soon at her destination. She entered through the swinging doors of the heavy stone building, which had only just been opened for the day, and as she looked about rather bewildered a clerk came up to her and asked her respectfully if he could be of service to her.

"Is this the Oriental Bank?" said Maud, feeling very nervous.

"Yes, miss; have you any business with us?"

"I want to see the manager, if you please."

"I am not sure if the manager is in his office yet, but I will see. Will you give me your name, if you please?"

"Yes, I am Miss Stapleton and I live in Devonshire. My grandfather is Colonel Stapleton."

"Thank you, miss; I will see if the manager can see you."

It is a curious thing that in the City, where a man would be kept waiting for an hour, there is always an *Open Sesame* for a young and charming lady. Whether it was due to this psychological fact or to the circumstance that as the bank had only just opened, business had scarcely begun, true it is that Miss Stapleton was introduced without any delay to the sacred precincts of the manager's office. This dignified official was opening his letters—and very formidable he looked sitting at a large table facing the door as Maudie entered. He raised his eyes for a moment, and as he did so, the stern business look on his face melted down in a curious way into one of benignity.

"Oh, Miss—Steeplehurst—"

"Stapleton, sir."

"Stapleton, of course. Will you sit down? What is it you require?"

Maudie's heart beat fiercely, but she controlled herself and took a seat opposite to the bald-headed and grey-bearded

manager, and after a moment's hesitation she explained in simple and clear language what she had come to ask for. She had an annuity of thirty pounds a year, which was paid to her by or through the Oriental Bank, and she wanted the manager to be kind enough to give her eleven hundred and twenty five pounds to-day instead of it, as she required the money most urgently.

The manager stroked his bald head and then stroked his beard.

"My dear young lady, I fear I must disappoint you. It is quite out of my power to advance anything on your annuity. If you were of age even——"

At this moment, a clerk entered with a card, and handed it to the manager.

"Tell Mr. Ramashan that I shall be at liberty in a few minutes."

"Mr. Ramashan says he won't detain you a moment, but he is in a great hurry."

"Then send him in. You see, Miss Stapleton, that this annuity of yours was purchased for you as a little something that would always be a certainty, and if you——Oh, Mr. Ramashan, I am very busy, as you see. What do you want this morning?"

Mr. Ramashan was a very curious little man. His hair and his long beard were as white as snow, and his eyes peered out from under his thick straight eyebrows as if from that place of concealment they could take a calm view of all mundane matters without making any mistakes. He was very deliberate in his manner and very decisive in his tone. The moment he opened his mouth it was clear that he was not a European. His language in its accent savoured of the house of Israel, but his nose did not bear out such an inference. Maudie did not listen to what he had to say. It was something about a bill of exchange, but she was crushed to the very dust by what the manager had told her. There was no hope, no hope! All was so cold, every one was so hard. She heard these two men of money talking, talking, and she said, "I must go."

But the hot tears were rushing into her eyes and she felt for her handkerchief. In drawing it out, her ring came with it and fell and rolled upon the ground.

The manager turned towards her and rising said:

"I am really deeply grieved, my dear young lady——"

But Mr. Ramashan had picked up the ring, for which Maudie, overcome as she was, stretched out her hand.

'My Got alive, but vot ish dat ring?'

"Give it me please, sir, and I will go."

"But vere did you get dat ring?" The old gentleman spoke deliberately indeed, but with strange energy, while a curious light seemed to come into his half-hidden eyes.

"I cannot tell you about it, sir; give it me and let me go away."

"But—but, dis is very strange: dis is vot never happened before! I vill gif you von hundret pouns for dat ring."

If the old gentleman had offered her a hundred pounds for her pocket-handkerchief Maudie could not have been more astonished. Nor, apparently, could the manager of the bank.

"What do you mean, Mr. Ramashan?" he said. "Let me see the ring. It is silver, evidently, curiously made, and with some sort of an inscription. I can't make out the words. What character are they in? Do you understand them?"

"Onderstand dem? Vy, my frend, dis is a sonshine ring! My young lady, dis is a sonshine ring!"

"Yes, I know that; they say it will bring the sunshine, but it won't."

"Yes, it vill! it vill! it vill! but ven vill you get married? Then it vill give sonshine!"

It was some time before Maudie could get the old gentleman to understand how much she knew about the ring, and how little; and when he had heard her story and how it was found upon the dead body of her father after a great battle in which the British were fighting against the Afghans, his hard eyes softened and he said:

"Vell, I vill tell you vot no one else in all Europe could tell you. Dis is a ring from Thibet which princes and great llamas give to their daughters as a marriage portion. You see deese letters. Dey say and dey mean, 'Buddha vill give you sonshine,' and de little letters below tell which stars to press to open de great moon." And then he went on to explain that the great silver disc was only a case for something that was concealed within, and that the three little marks at the end of the cursive characters were numbers which told the stars that were to be

pressed down in order to open the moon-like circle. He explained that in Thibet, to open the ring before the marriage contract had been signed would be a crime that no one dare commit lest the wrath of Sakia-muni should burst over his head in thunder instead of sunshine, because the ring was a consecrated one, and placed under the protection of Buddha in his capacity of "Lord of the home of marriage."

"Is it that now you go to be married?" persisted the curious old gentleman. "If not, I vill not open a sonshine ring. No! no! I have no fears, vat you call superstitions, but I would rather not."

Nobody admits that he has any superstitions; yet some people won't walk under a ladder, and some won't sit down thirteen to table, and some won't go to sea on a Friday. Mr. Hormutz Ramashan, the Parsee merchant of Bagdad and London, had no superstitions whatever, but he would not open a sunshine ring consecrated to Buddha (whom he didn't believe in) unless the young lady who owned it was really going to be married. Such are the contradictions of human nature.

Poor Maudie was so astonished at the whole story and so overpowered by conflicting emotions that only a gentle blush, a faint crimsoning like that of the eastern sky at the breaking of the dawn, overspread her cheeks as she answered, "Yes, sir; I am engaged," and then turning to the manager she added, "It is for *him* that I want the money."

"Vell, my sharming yung lady, den ve vill open zis ring, and zee how moch sonshine Buddha vill gif you."

The numbers marked on the ring were 2, 7 and 12; and Mr. Ramashan explained that these signified that the original giver of the ring had an especial devotion to the second, seventh and twelfth incarnations of Buddha. To press the second star alone was useless; to press number two and number seven together would be useless; but if the three were all pressed together then the ring would open. To do this was a little difficult. At first they thought they would have to send for a jeweller, but Mr. Ramashan said, "No; de yung lady must press one star. Ve vill do de oders ourselves. Ve must imagine dat ve are in a temple of Buddha, and dat I am de bridegroom and dat you are de priest." The manager of the bank was by this time as interested as the young lady and the old Parsee, and by the aid of nothing more

romantic than three penholders, they succeeded in pressing simultaneously the second, seventh and twelfth little stars, while Maudie herself held the hasp of the ring firmly in her left hand. In an instant the engraved cover flew high in the air, and in the cavity was disclosed one large lustrous diamond. As if resenting its long concealment from the light of heaven, it shot out a circle of dazzling rays. It was of the purest water, flawless and without the slightest tinge that could mar its perfection. It was evidently a gem of great price.

"Upon my word and honour, Miss Stapleton," said the manager, "you are a fortunate young lady."

"Mine Got!" cried the old Parsee, "Buddha has sent you some very bright sonshine! Is it not so?"

But Maudie had only one idea. Timorously she looked at the manager and asked him if it was worth £1,125. A short conversation followed, and when the Parsee gentleman understood exactly how matters stood, he gallantly said that the young lady ought not to lose her diamond of sunshine. If she would leave it in the safe keeping of the bank, he would advance the exact sum she wanted, and she might redeem the jewel any time within twelve months on repaying the money with six per cent. interest. And when the London Directory had been duly consulted, a clerk from the bank was dispatched to Messrs. Shortt and Sharpe with a cheque payable at sight for one thousand one hundred and twenty-five pounds sterling, drawn by Hormutz Ramashan on the Oriental Bank of London, and accompanied by a note from the manager that it was in payment of the interest on certain mortgages due that day by Sir Robert Burnside, of Burnside Hall, Devon.

Then it was that Maudie flew to a telegraph office and sent her message of joy to her broken-hearted lover, and with a bounding heart and a beaming smile hurried back to Thomas's Hotel in time to sit down to the luncheon table.

. . . . .

At last Sir Robert found courage to tear open his telegram. He had nerved himself for the worst. "I know it is all over with me," he said, "but I will bear it like a man." And this is what he read: "Be happy, darling, all is right; the money is paid. My ring has brought you sunshine at last.—MAUDIE."

Sir Robert sat for a moment like a man in a dream. He did not understand it all, but he knew that he was saved. Then he quietly rose and went straight up to his mother's room and kissed her, saying :

"Mother, darling, I have good news ; you need never leave the old spot and you will soon have sweet Maudie for your daughter."

How it turned out that Lord Dawlish after all had not started for his yachting excursion, and how he met Sir Robert at Thomas's Hotel, with the Leonards and Miss Stapleton the very next day, and how he took the matter up for the sake of his old friend the colonel, as he averred himself (but more probably for the sake of Maudie's sweet face), and how he sent one of his managers to the newly-discovered mine on the Burnside estate and advanced the necessary capital to develop it, need not be told here. Suffice it to say that the Burnside iron mine is one of the richest in that portion of Devonshire that abuts on Cornwall. That Sir Robert and Lady Burnside are rich and happy ; that the Dowager Lady Burnside still lives in her old home ; that the old colonel did not lose the love of his little darling, Maudie, when he gave her away at the altar as a bride, and that the glorious jewel that lay hid in Maudie's magic ring is seen only on great occasions, when it excites the envy of all the county.

And so her Eastern Talisman did really work the miracle of bringing down sunshine from heaven to earth.

T. WESTWOOD TEMPLE.

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## If a Man ask Bread.

By MARY S. HANCOCK.

### CHAPTER VIII.

"GUARDY! that man is always following us."

It was Doris who uttered the protest one morning. She had beguiled the Professor from his books, and they were walking over the heather towards the Fell. A month had passed since Rufus' funeral, and even Miss Priscilla had deemed it her duty to descend to common-places once more. She could not bring back the dead to life, but she might keep an eye on the living, and she had a distinct impression that she alone kept the whole place from falling into ruins.

In these days of gloom Doris had come very much to the front. It was she who looked after Allan's comfort while Miss Priscilla indulged in her grief. It was she who made the only bit of brightness in the household; but it is fair to add that she did not recognize how Allan turned to her for consolation and strength in an emergency of this kind.

He grew to depend upon her for most things, nor did he turn in vain.

All that her interest could suggest she did; and she even essayed to wean his thoughts from the burden that had fallen upon them—no light task this. Amongst other plans, one was that she should take him daily for a walk or for a ride over the hills.

The suggestion was hers, and *she* called for him every day at a certain hour, Allan enjoying the periodical stroll more than he could tell.

"What a grand walker you are!" she told him plainly. "It takes a long time to start you, but when this is done the result is satisfactory."

And he, laughing at her way of expressing the matter, made her a low bow for the encouragement.

Sometimes they drove along the high road that leads over Carter to the Scottish border; it is a grand drive, famous for the freshness of the air and the wild beauty of the scenery; but, somehow, Allan liked best to walk over the moors.

"It is more bracing," he said in explanation; nor did she find fault. Thus it was that she so frequently noticed the figure of a man lingering in the rear, or following them afar off, like one who fears to lose sight of his prey.

And then Doris' heart began to trouble her.

Was there some new trouble coming to them now?

"I am often right in my intuitions," she said mournfully to herself. "I begin to be afraid."

But Allan Gordon smiled when she repeated this to him.

"My dear child, that is 'Rob the Polis,' as the people call him. He has not much to do, and spends half his time in wandering about by the river or on the moor. He is not thinking of us."

"Oh, but he *is*," she persisted. "I see him hanging round Redmarshall continually."

Allan stopped and looked at her.

"Do you mean this?" he said quietly. "Then he must have discovered something. Let us hear what it is."

The girl caught his hand impulsively. She was apprehensive of ill.

"Don't! don't!" she cried quickly. "Who knows what he has to say?"

Allan drew her hand through his arm.

"My child," he said reassuringly, "*we* have no cause for alarm. Therefore, why need we fear Rob? Besides, I would give much to discover the—murderer."

Then they waited, and the man came up slowly, even hesitatingly, as if he were shy of meeting the Professor.

"Well, Rob, how's all with you to-day?" said Allan heartily. "And have you any news?"

"Nay, theer's nae noos, but—*I'm thinkin'!*"

"That's the want of the day, Rob; so do *you* go on thinking."

"Aye!" The "polis" lifted up his rugged head, pushed his "dear-stalker" off his forehead and looked at Allan fixedly.

"I misdoot ye'll no be likin' ma thowts, sor. They're mighty quare."

"I've more toleration for queerness than many folk, Rob, my man. What's troubling you?"

"Th' murder," said Rob bluntly.

"Ah! And it's worried *me* not a little too. It is uncomfortable

work as things are, and no one likes to be confronted with a mystery."

"True fur ye, sor, but—" Rob scratched his head and felt puzzled—"ye wur furst nigh him that's gaed awa', wur ye no?"

"Yes, I heard the shot and hurried out. I wondered what it was. Then I saw——"

"Aye. Wull, ye needna say ower muckle noo, ye ken." This very professionally.

"Oh, I don't mind talking to you, Rob. I know you have the case in charge."

"A—ye!" Rob was less professional, and more upset than he liked. "But, theer's nowt bin *sed*, as yet."

"Very likely not. We know nothing, do we?"

"Nay, but—I'm thinkin'."

There was a long pause and then Doris said very softly:

"What are you thinking about, Rob? Let us hear it—and get it over."

A slight smile had been playing across Allan's face, but at her words, almost tremulous in their earnestness, he turned and stared.

"Is it really a clue that you have now, Rob?" he asked seriously. "If so, do not waste time over it."

"Aye; but ye see, Mr. Allan, sor, I've kenned ye ivir sence ye wur a bit lad—a bonnie bit lad, forbye."

"You have, Rob."

"An' I've aye thowt theer wur niver onyboddy like yersel'."

"Thank you, Rob."

"It's no purfeeshional, ye ken, Mr. Allan; it's no just fur whaat I'm paid, but——"

A long pause, in which Allan stood wondering, and Doris quivered with unknown terror.

"An' sae—I'm thinkin'," repeated Rob slowly for the third time. "Min' me, Mr. Allan, sor, if ye'd rayther be afterr makin' a flittin', why, that's nayther here nor theer. It's haired o' *me* ter hae sic an a wurk i' ma hands. Woe's the daay."

Allan's astonishment and the old man's grief were alike remarkable.

"Rob," said Allan very gently, "I had no idea you liked my brother so well. I take all this kindly."

"Wull ye be after makin' a flittin', sor?"

Allan shook his head.

"No, no, old friend. I must face the sorrow out at home."

"I'm no thinkin' o' the sorrow, nor o' Mister Rufus naythur. 'Tis yersel I'm maist concerned aboot; wull ye gang, or no?"

"No," said Allan resolutely. "Why should I go? I am obliged to stay and look after business matters."

Rob bent his head in doubt.

"Look ye here, Mr. Allan," he said firmly. "I'm doin' wrang, na doot, but, fur the third time, wull ye gang awa'?"

"Why should he go, Rob?" interposed Doris. "Is it running away that you are advising?"

Rob nodded without looking at her.

"But *why*?"

"Eh, dinna ax *me*, honey; dinna ax puir auld Rob. I daurna saay—gin I wud."

"Rob!" Allan put his hand on the old man's arm. "Rob! why are you talking in this fashion? Do you—can you really be hinting that I—Allan Gordon—have aught to do with the murder of my brother Rufus? Is *that* your meaning?" Allan's voice was clear and resonant; he held his head up in the air. His face was the face of a man to be trusted.

Rob looked more a culprit than *he*.

"God forgie me," he murmured sadly; "but that's just what I *am* thinkin', Mr. Allan. Aye, I do, sor—it's gaes till ma verra hairt ter saay thae wurds."

Allan's hand dropped by his side. This was evidently both a shock and a surprise.

"Why, man!" he cried sternly, "Rufus never did me any harm, nor would I have harmed him. This is sheer nonsense, Rob."

"It may be ter yersel', Mr. Allan; but I canna help—*thinkin'*."

"Tut, tut. You've got the murder on your brain; but you are on the wrong scent this time."

"Ye wur fund oot aside *him*, i' th' gairdin, ye min'. Theer wur just ye an' him—yer twa sels—an'——"

The old man covered his face with his hands.

"I'm wae, Mr. Allan; wae ter ha' leaved till noo. Gang awa', sor; gang awa', an' it'll no be auld Rob that'll say ae wurrd ter hairm ye."

Allan was a good deal touched by the man's evident concern, though he was vexed at his extraordinary notion.

"Listen to me, Rob," he said quietly. "You've unsettled your brain a bit; all this has been too much for you. Come to Redmarshall for a bit, and we'll nurse you up."

But Rob shrank back in horror.

"Me up till th' hoose! Na, na; I canna do 't. I' would set a' th' folks on at wonce't. Eh, Mr. Allan, ma hairt is sair fur ye." Then Doris flung herself into the breach.

"I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, Rob," she cried passionately, her face ablaze, her eyes flashing. "You know how good Mr. Gordon is to everybody—so kind, so gentle——"

"Doris!" Allan interrupted her in tones full of pain. "Doris, don't praise me too much!"

"And you accuse him—*him*, the best of mortals—of so vile a crime! You might as well say it was I."

"I sed nowt—I'm *thinkin'*," said Rob, with a tremor in his voice.

"You told him he might run away. Just as if he were guilty and feared to own it."

"Aye; but I'd gie ma life fur his'n—ony day."

Allan, for once, made no response; he was listening with all his heart to Doris. This was a revelation to him, and it set his pulses tingling wildly.

"But he is not going from here," said the girl proudly. "He is going to stay, for he has lived a simple, straightforward life amongst you always; and you ought—you ought—Rob, to know better."

The passionate quiver of her tone thrilled the heart of the man who listened—the man who stood in danger of his life. It was all he could do not to stretch out his arms and take her into them and bless her for her warm partisanship.

But Rob was still there, and Rob was still unconvinced, still bent on torturing himself, and wounding them.

"Doris, my darling," he cried in momentary forgetfulness, "Rob knows where to find me if I am wanted. I shall not run away, Rob. There is no need for *me* to hide. I shall remain at Redmarshall."

Rob lifted his head, sore with the weight of woe he carried.

"Eh, mon," he broke out hoarsely. "Do ye no ken 'at theer's mair nor me ahint this. Aye, at Redmarshall itsel'."

"Rob! Rob!" cried Allan aloud. "Oh, what are you saying? Are others looking at me as you do?"

Rob bent his head.

"It's no ma wull. I'm set a-thinkin'," he said slowly.

Then Allan took Doris' hand and walked briskly down the fell-side, leaving old Rob, who sank down upon the heather, burying his face in agony.

The accuser and the accused parted thus. The one, overcome by the horror of the thing that he was forced to do; the other, erect, stately, unchanged outwardly, chafed inwardly at the unspeakable humiliation of the moment, all undeserved as it was.

Doris clung to him tremblingly.

"How could he—how *could* he!" she kept on murmuring. "Will they hurt you? Will they take you from us?"

He, the accused, became the comforter.

"No, no, my—child; how can they? There is no proof. I was in my study at work when I heard the shot. Rob says he found me near Rufus, and that is true. I reached him before even Priscilla had time to go out; but I did not fire—or shoot him, Doris."

"Oh, I know—I know!" she cried passionately. "How wicked of that old man to say such things!—Don't repeat them to me."

Allan patted her hand tenderly.

"It is well to have *one* who still believes in you and still trusts you," he said; "but this scene will close my lips, Doris—about—something else which time might have brought about—*perhaps*." He bent down and gazed at her for one instant with a strange undefined look in his eyes that made her turn her own away. Then, straightening himself, he said quickly, "Come, Doris, come." Adding under his breath, "I was very nearly making a fool of myself—for what can *she*, a bright young creature, have in common with a worn old bookworm like myself?"

He put the thought from him; there were others that hustled it away for the moment—thoughts of peril and difficulty, and pain; yes, acute pain, for Allan had a strange, yet shrewd suspicion that Rob was, after all, but a "mouthpiece," and that the more vigorous-minded Miss Priscilla moved behind the scenes, seeking to place her finger on her favourite brother's murderer; burning to wreak her vengeance upon some one—it mattered not *whom*, so long as his death was avenged to her satisfaction.

Miss Priscilla had forgotten who has said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay."

## CHAPTER IX.

THE days that followed were exceedingly bitter ones for Allan Gordon.

It was not easy to live in the house with Miss Priscilla, to feel her eyes searching into him morning, noon and night—in stern inquiry.

She took up the *role* of an amateur detective with a keenness that was horrible.

"If I can only discover something I shall die contented. Is *he* to live on, comfortable, honoured, even respected, and Rufus to remain unavenged? Not while I live, at any rate."

And Miss Priscilla could be very bitter when she chose. She even vented some of her wrath on Doris' head when she saw the two so much together.

"She has already forgotten Rufus," said Priscilla in her heart. "Rufus was a man, he was something to admire; but as for Allan—he is insignificant and absurd. His work is ridiculous; *he* will never help to redeem the house. Who reads his books? Who cares for what he writes?"

She was unjust, as most bitter people are. Allan wrote for the studious and the thoughtful, and some day he would be recognized and appreciated.

In the meantime life was hard, undoubtedly; and Allan had to endure the hardness, not the least part of which was due to the fact that he owed the fresh importation to his sister.

"Verily," said he, when alone in his study, "it has been written, 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household.'"

Those were sad times on which he had fallen.

It was wonderful how patient he was with Priscilla, and how he bore with her extreme irritation.

"This calamity must surely have turned her brain," he told himself day after day. "In a little while the cloud will pass and she will be what she always was. I must bear with her."

But not all the patience in the world availed much with Miss Priscilla.

"Hur brain's gotten a rare twist," remarked old John in the privacy of the servants' hall. "She's just bad to manage," and Mrs. Thompson, the cook, echoed his sentiments by saying heartily, "I ken that finely."



But throughout all, Allan tried with all his might to prevent himself from thinking too often and too tenderly of Doris. Nay, he even went so far as to suggest that she should leave Redmarshall for a time, and travel abroad with a suitable companion whom he would engage for her. But it was of no avail.

"I shall certainly not desert Redmarshall," said Doris, and he knew she meant it, in spite of Miss Priscilla's contrariety. And her determination pleased him, although he said nothing to influence it.

All through this time Doris could not help remembering that one moment of vivid experience when Allan had called her "darling."

He hoped that it had passed unnoticed. It was a slip—made by a man tempted out of his habitual self-repression. But he did not know that she had heard it, and hearing, had treasured the memory of the word.

Allan was proud. His poverty had kept him silent before. A double misfortune sealed his lips *now*. Not until all mistakes were cleared would he—could he—dare to speak—if, indeed, he ever hoped to attain to such a period.

Doris' wealth barred the way. Unlike Rufus, Allan could not bring himself to find shelter behind a wealthy marriage.

"I should despise myself," he said over and over again.

And then, finally, there was this other thing, with Miss Priscilla's added bitterness at its back.

Thanks to Rob's hints, Allan knew now how much plotting was going on secretly. He could almost see Priscilla at work, weaving a web that should entrap him; and Allan shuddered at this thought. Priscilla, fierce, resentful, dogged, kept looking on from beneath a pair of shaggy brows that were like some old wizard's in their ruggedness, and gave a certain ferocity to her face.

Priscilla's look was almost the finishing stroke to his career.

He began to find it impossible to go on writing, the mechanical effort told upon him, continued labour became irksome, and in this strait Doris again helped him.

She found him, irresolute and mournful, at his desk, oppressed by a sense of physical incapacity, and she came to the rescue.

"Do you know that I can write?" she asked, with an attempt

at playfulness that she was far from feeling. "Let me be the scribe; you shall dictate."

He regarded her with mixed emotions of gratitude and hesitancy.

"It is too kind, but——"

"There is no 'but.' I want employment. Miss Priscilla told me so yesterday, and this morning the Reverend Charles Surtees said the same thing—rather differently, I admit."

"Priscilla is always forcible, though not always polite," he admitted with a quiet nod.

She seated herself at his desk, drawing the blotting-pad towards her, and choosing a quill with rare celerity.

"Now I am ready; begin!" she commanded heroically.

"It will be dry for you."

"Never mind. I require enlightenment on many points. Miss Priscilla believes that I am deplorably ignorant."

"It is true that I want my book finished."

"Certainly, and you will never have a better chance of doing so."

"But, why should you?"

"Why have you been troubled with me? Professor, the thing is square. Go on."

And Allan hailed her efforts as a deliverance.

He wanted to crowd on efforts and finish.

"At any moment Rob may take it into his stupid head to appear," he mused. "I must work at fever heat."

And he communicated some of his energy to her.

They worked from breakfast to dinner untiringly, Allan's brain as active as ever; her hand resolute and firm. And the book progressed.

Down in the village Rob "kept himself to himself," terrified to move lest Miss Priscilla should pounce down upon him and insist upon Allan's arrest. It was so difficult for old Rob to withstand Miss Priscilla, for she had found out that his one longing was to live and die in the place where he had been so long, and she was continually threatening to get him either removed or dismissed, and, in either case, what would become of "auld Rob?"

He did not stop to reflect that it is a well-known fact that "between two stools you not unfrequently come to the ground,"

and that it is an equally well-understood saying, "No man can serve two masters."

Old Rob thought of his little cottage, "the bit gairdin," the purling burn at the brae-foot, and the grand rugged country of his birth, where he had breathed the pure fresh air and thanked God daily for his Border birthplace; and Rob felt that not for "a' th' Gordons that ivor wur" could he leave this—all this—and go away.

"I've a married dawter i' th' sooth," said he of an evening, as he sat in the porch with his hand on his collie's head. "An' she's a decent lass; she'll hae ma faast enuff, I'm thinkin'!"

Then his eye would catch the glint of the sun's golden setting reflected in the burn, his ear would hear the last shrill cry of the home-bound curlew as he sped overhead on wide-spread wing; and over the rough crags and stern background of the Cheviots there would steal the wondrous tints of red and purple, the mists lying pale and faint against their summits, the shadows creeping low round their feet; and between, that belt of blazing glory borrowed from a sky that always made old Rob think of another land, "Jerusalem the Golden," where so many he loved had foregathered already.

"I canna go!" the old man would cry, with heart nigh unto bursting. "Great Lord in Heaven help me! I canna go fra' heer."

Then the collie would rear itself upon its hind legs, and planting its fore-feet upon his knee, would solemnly lick his bent head, as though to say, "Though all the world forsake you, I am by. I'm with you through rain and mist, storm and sunshine, from sunset to sun-rising." And the tears would fall from Rob's eyes, and he sat, always "thinkin'."

Oh, yes. Those were bad days for him as well, for he was haunted by the shadow of what his own heart told him was a great temptation. He was slow in action, far too slow for Miss Priscilla.

When he pleaded for "proofs" she laughed.

"I want justice," she cried angrily. "Is there no such thing in this country? I will sell the estate itself rather than let my brother's death go unpunished."

"Ye're tar'ble haird, Miss Preescilla," said the old man, who had known her all her life, from the days when she trotted along

the lanes by her father's side. "Ye're tar'ble haird. Yon's yer brither too; an' a better mon he is than t'other was. Ye canna min' a' 'at ye ken, shurely, mem."

"I know very well," she flung back passionately. "If you are not fit for your work, say so, Rob; and I'll pretty soon see that some one else is appointed."

"Dear forbid! Eh, mistress; th' Lord forgie's this daay; fur shure, it's no gude wurrk—this."

Miss Priscilla's lip curled. She had not the sweetest temper in the world, as Rob had heard before. Very few more words would have brought a storm about his ears.

When matters came to this pass he generally took care to end the interview; nor did Miss Priscilla desire to continue it.

There was no invitation to wander into the kitchen and have a cup of tea with Mrs. Thompson and old John. A gloomy depression seemed to have settled down upon Redmarshall and its mistress that no one could pierce through.

*(To be concluded.)*